Chapter 3:

Counseling and Guidance, Referral to Other Services, and Other Goods and Services

Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Policy and Procedures Manual

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# Definitions

1. “Counseling and guidance” is the process in which the DBVI counselor and the consumer form a working partnership to assist him/her to achieve an employment goal that is consistent with his/her unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, interests and informed choices.
2. “Referral to other service providers” refers to the process by which a DBVI counselor may refer a person to another DBVI staff person (i.e. AT trainer, AT counselor, benefits counselor, employment consultant) or external provider (i.e. community rehabilitation providers, supported employment or other workforce development partners) for specialized services.
3. “Other goods and services” refers to any other services necessary for a person to achieve an employment goal that have not otherwise been defined and described in the DBVI Policy and Procedures Manual.

# Counseling and Guidance

A. Vermont DBVI recognizes that counseling and guidance is a core vocational rehabilitation service. DBVI also recognizes that the DBVI counselor should provide counseling and guidance services throughout the rehabilitation process. DBVI counselors use a strength-based approach to guidance and counseling that focuses on the consumers’ abilities, assets and potential rather than their limitations.

B. Guidance and counseling may include but is not limited to:

1. Establishing a relationship of mutual respect, through which the DBVI counselor can encourage, support and challenge the consumer to achieve an employment goal.
2. Assisting the individual to gain a comprehensive understanding and awareness of his/her unique abilities, interests, strengths, resources, priorities and concerns, in order to identify the factors that will be critical to the achievement of his/her vocational goal.
3. Facilitating the individual’s understanding and awareness of his/her disability. Help the person find ways to work around and/or accommodate any disability related barriers to their employment goal.
4. Ensuring the consumer has adequate information to make fully informed choices about his/her employment goals and vocational services.
5. Helping the consumer address and work around any personal, health, economic, benefits-related, or social issues that may be an impediment to achieving their vocational goal.
6. Involving significant others (with the consumer’s consent) such as family members, relatives, and friends in the community who can support the individual and at times provide valuable resources towards the vocational goal.
7. Providing follow along services that are not intrusive but continue to support the achievement of a long-term vocational outcome.
8. Encouraging self-reliance by teaching the consumer how to find information about and access available community resources. Provide guidance to the individual about how to tap into natural workplace supports and/or other community networks to promote independence beyond the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.

# Referral to Other Service Providers

1. During the rehabilitation process, when appropriate, the DBVI counselor will refer a consumer to other specialized services to assist the individual to achieve the vocational goal. Such services may be provided internally by DBVI staff (i.e. VABIR, CWS, benefits counseling, AT trainer, AT consultant) and/or by external organizations such as Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Department of Labor, Vermont Center for Independent Living, Social Security Administration or supported employment providers. All such services must be listed on the IPE and meet the requirements outlined in DBVI Chapter 2, Individualized Plan for Employment, of the DBVI Policy and Procedure Manual. When making referrals to external providers, DBVI staff will abide by all agency confidentiality requirements and any federal or state laws governing the source or type of information requested or released.
2. To ensure the best possible outcome, it is very important that specialized services are well coordinated between the DBVI counselor and the other service providers. To accomplish this, the DBVI counselor will have frequent and ongoing communication with the other service providers. The DBVI counselor will work in collaboration with partnering service providers and work to ensure all the professional staff involved with the individual are aligned and working together effectively.
3. The following are requirements for referral and collaboration with other service providers included in the plan for employment. The DBVI counselor, with consumer consent, will provide to the service provider:
   1. Consumer’s contact information
   2. Detailed information on the purpose of the referral as it relates to the person’s employment goal
   3. As appropriate, any information regarding the individual’s interests, strengths, priorities, resources, and concerns as necessary for the service provider to assist the person achieve his/her employment goal.
   4. As appropriate, any medical or diagnostic information that may be important for the service provider to know prior to providing services.
4. In many circumstances, it may be a best practice for the consumer, DBVI counselor and service provider to meet as a support team to outline the purpose of the services and describe the respective roles of the DBVI counselor and service provider. This will ensure the consumer understands the respective roles and has clear expectations about what each party will provide.
5. The DBVI counselor is encouraged to, or as needed, maintain regular contact with the service provider(s) to monitor progress and facilitate ongoing communication.

1. The DBVI counselor is encouraged to, or as needed, integrate information and expertise provided by the other service providers into the rehabilitation counseling process. The following are some case examples:

Example one: An individual who is an SSI beneficiary may initially limit his or her employment and earnings goal, based on concerns about loss of cash and healthcare benefits. Consultation with a benefits counselor may reveal that these concerns are based on inaccurate information and the individual may be eligible for work incentives that will improve their overall financial circumstances. As a result, the DBVI counselor may encourage the consumer to adjust his/her employment goal.

Example two: A DBVI consumer may have an employment goal that requires significant interaction with the clients of a business. However, consultation with a community rehabilitation provider’s job developer may reveal the individual experiences significant anxiety when interacting with business clients. The DBVI counselor may use such feedback to help the consumer reconsider their employment goal.

# Other Goods and Services

A. The DBVI counselor can provide or purchase any other goods or services necessary for a person to achieve an employment goal that has not otherwise been defined and described in the DBVI Policy and Procedures manual. The DBVI counselor must describe in the IPE why the goods or services are necessary for the individual to achieve an employment outcome. The DBVI counselor must ensure the cost of goods and services are reasonable and typical. Purchases provided under this section that exceed $500 must be approved by the Division Director prior to the purchase.