**KEY: language that is recommended for deletion is found within [brackets] (and also with a grey background). Text that is proposed to be added is \*underlined text with asterisks\* preceding the first proposed new word and immediately after the last proposed new word of a sentence, paragraph or section.**

**Policy Manual—[October 2014] \*July 1, 2017\***

**Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)**

**Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB)**

**Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR)**

**[Policy and Procedure Manual]**

**CHAPTER 1 - GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Section 1. - Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind**

**(BESB)**

**a) Affirmative Action**

**The Connecticut Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (Bureau), within the Department of Rehabilitation Services (agency) is an affirmative action employer and strongly supports all state, federal and Constitutional mandates and complies with all policies established by the Department of Rehabilitation Services pursuant to these mandates, laws and regulations.**

**b) BESB Mission Statement**

**The State of Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) is responsible for initiating, coordinating, and implementing the education and training of Connecticut's blind and visually impaired children in order to maintain their academic, physical, emotional, and social progress at age-level, grade level or diagnosed ability level. BESB serves Connecticut's blind adults through ongoing educational, vocational, and living skills programs in order to empower them to achieve employment success in their chosen profession and to enhance their self-sufficiency.**

**Section 2. - Legal Benefits for Individuals in Connecticut who are \*Legally\* Blind**

**In accordance with State Statute, [legally blind] residents of the State of Connecticut \*who are legally blind\* are eligible for the following benefits:**

**a) Property Tax Exemption**

**A [legally blind] person in Connecticut \*who is legally blind\* is generally eligible for an exemption of $3,000 of assessed evaluation on his \*or her\* property. If the property is owned jointly with a spouse or is in the name of a spouse living with the [legally blind] person \*who is legally blind\*, the exemption would generally also be available (Sec. 12-81 (17) Connecticut General Statutes).**

**[Public Act No. 87-165, passed by the 1985 Legislature,] \*Connecticut General Statutes Section 12-81j\* provides for a $2,000 exemption on a financial need basis in addition to the $3,000 exemption. However, each town [legislative body] must first adopt the benefit for it to be available in that town.**

**\*For the additional $2,000 exemption, the financial needs test requires that\* [Financial needs requirements are given “Provided] the total of such person’s adjusted gross income as determined for purposes of the Federal Income Tax plus any other income of such person” is not more than $14,000 if such person is married or not more than $12,000 if such person is not married.**

**[The Bureau has sent letters to each town encouraging the adoption of this additional $2,000 benefit.**

**A copy of PA-165 is available from the Bureau on request (1-800-842-4510 outside the Hartford area, 860-602-4000 in the Hartford area.)]**

**b) Income Tax Exemption [(effective 1/1/87)]**

**A [legally blind] person \*who is legally blind\* is eligible for an extra standard deduction on his Federal Income Tax. The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind will issue a Certificate of Legal Blindness on request to persons on the Agency Register. This Certificate can be submitted with the income tax forms as necessary proof of deduction. Contact your tax consultant. There is no additional deduction for State Income Tax.**

**c) Identification Card (I.D. Card)**

**A [legally blind] person \*who is legally blind\* is eligible to receive a “Connecticut Identification Card,” similar to a photo operator’s license. This has proved useful for identification purposes. Application should be made through the Department of Motor Vehicles, telephone 860-263-5700.**

**d) Fishing License**

**[“]No fee shall be charged for any sport fishing license issued under this chapter to any [blind] person \*who is legally blind\*. Proof of such blindness shall be furnished; in the case of a veteran, by the United State Veterans Administration and, in the case of any other person, by the State Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind[”] (Section 26-29 \*of the\* Connecticut General Statutes). The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind will issue a Certificate of Legal Blindness on request to persons on the Agency register. The Certificate should be taken to the Town Clerk who will handle the issuance of a license.**

**e) Travel**

**[i] \*(1)\*. Local Bus Discount - A [legally blind] person \*who is legally blind\* is entitled to travel for half fare on Connecticut Transit buses and other local bus systems under contract to the State. AMTRAK offers a 15% discount from regular train fare.**

**[ii] \*(2)\*. Metro North Commuter Railroad - An individual with a disability can [use the Connecticut Transit Handicapped I.D. discount card to] \*apply to\* receive reduced fares on Metro North[. If one does not have a Connecticut Transit I.D. card, applications can be obtained by calling 212-878-7294] \*by calling 718-330-1234\*.**

**f) Parking Privilege**

**A [legally blind] person \*who is legally blind\* is eligible for a special parking identification card, which permits use of places reserved for [handicapped] \*accessible\* parking. Applications are available from the Department of Motor Vehicles. [There is a $5.00 fee.] A Certificate of Legal Blindness from the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind can be used as proof of blindness.**

**If you apply for the special parking permit and currently hold a valid Connecticut operator’s license, the license must be surrendered to the Department of Motor Vehicles at the following address: DMV, Medical Qualifications Unit, Room 327, 60 State Street, Wethersfield, CT 06109-2510, telephone # 860-263-5700. If you are certified to be [legally blind] \*a person who is legally blind\*, you cannot hold an operator’s license.**

**\*g) Veteran’s Property Tax Exemption**

**A veteran who has been determined to have service-related blindness by the U.S. Veterans’ Administration, may receive a property tax exemption of $10,000 for their home, provided that the home is owned by the veteran or the veteran’s spouse. \***

**Section 3. - Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

**a) Administration of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Program is one of four major Programs within the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind and is responsible for administering the vocational rehabilitation program for [blind] individuals in the State of Connecticut \*who are legally blind\*. All services will be provided in accordance with the appropriate federal and state statutes and the Bureau’s State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation for [blind] individuals \*who are legally blind as described and included in the Unified State Plan for Connecticut’s implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).\* The Bureau is organizationally located within the Department of Rehabilitation Services.**

**The General Statutes of Connecticut, Chapter 174, Sec. 10-294a defines blindness for the purpose of delineation of responsibilities of the agency as follows: (a) Central visual acuity which does not exceed 20/200 in the better eye with corrective lenses; or, (b) Limitation in the fields of vision such that the widest diameter of the visual fields subtends an angle no greater than 20 degrees.**

**Clients who are not blind at referral but have a progressive condition, which will lead to blindness in a short period of time, may be accepted for services. Additionally, children who are or were served by the Bureau’s Children’s Services Program on or after January 1, 2010 and who meet the statutory definition of visually impaired \*(central visual acuity that does not exceed 20/70 in the better eye with correcting lenses)\* may be served by the Bureau’s Vocational Rehabilitation Program.**

**b) State Rehabilitation Council**

**The State Rehabilitation Council is a body of individuals, appointed by the governor, which provides recommendations to the State Director of the Bureau concerning the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in the state.**

**The following summarizes the functions of the State[wide] Rehabilitation Council relative to the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program at the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind.**

**\*(1)\* Reviewing, analyzing, and advising the Bureau regarding performance with particular attention to:**

**\*(A)\*Eligibility (including order of selection)**

**\*(B)\* Extent, scope, and effectiveness of services provided**

**\*(C)\*Functions performed**

**\*(D) Due process hearing decisions (transmitted in a manner to ensure that the identity of the participants in the hearings is kept confidential).\***

**\*(2)\*As possible, evaluating program effectiveness and consumer satisfaction of all federal and state-funded rehabilitation services provided by \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] and other agencies.**

**\*(3)\*Making recommendations to the governor, on a yearly basis, regarding the effectiveness of rehabilitation services in the state.**

**\*(4)\*Assisting in the development of the state plan for service provision, the strategic plan, and amendments to the plan.**

**\*(5)\*Coordinating with the State Independent Living Council (SILC).**

**\*(6) In consultation with the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, determining the type of documentation that the Program must maintain for each applicant and eligible individual.\***

**\*(7)Coordinating with other councils within the state including the Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health Councils, and an advisory group established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).\***

**CHAPTER 2 - GENERAL POLICIES [AND PROCEDURES]**

**Section 1. - Client Assistance Program (CAP)**

**A Client Assistance Program (CAP) was established by the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1984. Persons eligible for assistance under this program are those who are receiving or seeking services under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended \*, as well as individuals who are seeking or receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services.\* CAP \*services are\* [is] free of charge [and available to all persons applying for or receiving vocational rehabilitation services].**

**CAP [is a unit of the Office of Protection and Advocacy. It] provides [applicants/clients of the vocational rehabilitation system and independent living centers] information and referral, as well as assistance in pursuing legal, administrative, and other available remedies to insure rights under the Rehabilitation Act \*as amended in Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act\*.**

**The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor [is encouraged to] \*shall\* remind applicants/clients of the Client Assistance Program at any time in the rehabilitation process when it is felt that the person can benefit from the services offered by CAP which are outlined below:**

**a) Help applicants/clients to understand rehabilitation services.**

**b) Advise applicants/clients of all benefits available to them through rehabilitation programs, related Federal and State assistance programs, and their respective rights and responsibilities.**

**c) Assist applicants/clients in their relationships with projects, programs, and facilities.**

**d) Mediate disputes between applicants/clients and the [agency] \*Bureau\* prior to any other action.**

**e) Help applicants/clients in pursuing legal, administrative, and other available remedies.**

**f) Advise state and other agencies of identified systemic problem areas in the delivery of rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities and suggest methods and means to improve [agency] \*Bureau\* performance.**

**g) Assist or advise \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselors in providing services to clients.**

**Clients may contact CAP at:**

**Client Assistance Program**

**60-B Weston Street**

**Hartford, CT 06120**

**\*(860)\*297-4300 or 1-800-842-7303**

**[Policy]**

**All clients must be informed of services available from CAP at each of the following stages in the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] process:**

**\*a)\* [-] Application/Initial Interview**

**\*b) When assigned to an Order of Selection (OOS) Category if the Vocational Rehabilitation Program is operating under an Order Of Selection.\***

**\*c)\*[-] IPE Development**

**\*d)\* [-] Closure**

**\*e) Whenever vocational rehabilitation services for an individual are reduced, suspended, or terminated.\***

**[Procedures**

**1. The VR Counselor will distribute information describing the CAP to all new clients along with information pertaining to the timely review of Rehabilitation Counselor determinations concerning the furnishing or denial of services.**

**2. Upon completion of the IPE, the VR Counselor will review information in the IPE concerning the CAP with all clients who enter Status 12.**

**3.Whenever a client's case is closed from the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, the VR Counselor will send information concerning the CAP to the client along with the closure letter.]**

**Section 2. - Case [Folder and] Record of Services**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program is required to maintain for each applicant or eligible individual a record of services that includes, to the extent pertinent, the following documentation:**

**a) If an applicant has been determined to be an eligible individual, documentation supporting that determination.**

**b) If an applicant \*or eligible individual receiving services under an Individualized Plan for Employment\* has been determined to be ineligible, documentation supporting that determination.**

**c) Documentation supporting the determination that an individual has a significant disability or a most significant disability.**

**\*d) Documentation that describes the justification for closing an applicant's or eligible individual's record of services if that closure is based on reasons other than ineligibility, including, as appropriate, documentation indicating that the Bureau has satisfied the requirements of closure without an eligibility decision.\***

**\*e)\* [d)] If an individual with a significant disability requires \*an exploration of their abilities, capabilities, and capacity to perform in realistic work situations through the use of trial work experiences to determine whether the individual is an eligible individual, documentation supporting the need for, and the plan relating to that exploration, and documentation regarding the periodic assessments carried out during the trial work experiences.\* [ a trial work period or extended evaluation in order to determine whether the individual is an eligible individual, documentation supporting the need for the trial work period or extended evaluation, and documentation supporting the periodic assessments conducted during the trial work period or extended evaluation.]**

**\*f)\* [e)] The \*Individualized Plan for Employment\* (IPE) and any amendments to the IPE.**

**[f) Documentation supporting the development of the employment goal, nature and scope of services included in the individual's IPE and, for students with disabilities who are receiving special education services, in the student's IEP, documentation of coordination with IDEA.]**

**\*g) Documentation describing the extent to which the applicant or eligible individual exercised informed choice regarding the provision of assessment services and the extent to which the eligible individual exercised informed choice in the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment with respect to the selection of the specific employment outcome, the specific vocational rehabilitation services needed to achieve the employment outcome, the entity to provide the services, the employment setting, the settings in which the services will be provided, and the methods to procure the services.\***

**\*h)\* [g)] In the event that an individual's IPE provides for \*vocational rehabilitation\* services [or a job placement] in a non-integrated setting, a justification \*to support the need\* for [that] \*the\* non-integrated setting.**

 **[h) Documentation of the periodic reviews and evaluations of progress toward achieving the employment goal.]**

**i) In the event that an individual obtains competitive employment, verification that the individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage and that the individual’s wages and level of benefits are not less than that customarily paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by non-disabled individuals.**

**\*j) In the event an individual achieves an employment outcome in which the individual is compensated in accordance with section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act or the Bureau closes the record of services of an individual in extended employment on the basis that the individual is unable to achieve an employment outcome in a competitive and integrated setting, or that an eligible individual through informed choice chooses to remain in extended employment, documentation of the results of semi-annual and annual reviews, including the individual's input into those reviews, and of the individual's or, if appropriate, the individual's representative's acknowledgment that those reviews were conducted.\***

**\*k)\* [j)] Documentation concerning any action [and] \*or\* decision resulting from a request by an individual for review of a [Rehabilitation Counselor] determination \*made by Bureau personnel\*.**

**\*l) In the event that an applicant or eligible individual requests that documentation in the record of services be amended and the documentation is not amended, documentation of the request.**

**m) In the event an individual is referred to another program through the Bureau’s information and referral system, including other components of the statewide workforce development system, documentation on the nature and scope of services provided by the Bureau to the individual and on the referral itself.**

**n) In the event an individual's record of service is closed due to the achievement of an employment outcome, documentation that demonstrates the services provided under the individual's Individualized Plan for Employment contributed to the achievement of the employment outcome.**

**o) In the event an individual's record of service is closed due to the achievement of an employment outcome, documentation verifying that the requirements for such a closure have been satisfied.**

**The Bureau, in consultation with the State Rehabilitation Council, determines the type of documentation to maintain for each applicant and eligible individual in order to meet these requirements.\***

**[Policy]**

**The [VR Counselor] \*Bureau\* will maintain \*an electronic case file\* [a folder] which documents a record of services for each client that includes, to the extent pertinent, the above documentation. \*Additionally, a paper file shall be maintained for each applicant and eligible individual that contains original copies of documents with client or authorized representative signatures, and other forms as prescribed by federal and state requirements.\***

**[Procedures]**

**Case Folders**

**All vocational rehabilitation documentation and case recordings will be maintained \*in the electronic case management system. To the extent that paper documentation is retained for a client, it shall be organized\* in a four-way folder. The [VR Counselor] \*Bureau\* will maintain all case files [assigned to their caseloads] in a secure location.**

**Case Record Filing Procedures**

**\*To the extent that paper documentation existed prior to the implementation of a computerized case management system, and to the extent that Policy requires the retention of original documents with client or authorized representative signatures, such documentation shall be organized as noted below in a four-way folder:\* [The case record of services will maintain filing as outlined below] Note that specific reports from providers may not be applicable to all situations:**

**Section 1 - Medical Data**

**1. Low Vision Report**

**2. Ophthalmological Report**

**3. General Medical Report**

**4. Hospital Data**

**5. Audiological Report**

**6. Psychiatric Reports (NOT psychological)**

**Section 2 - Case History and Rehabilitation Plan**

**1. Case Narratives (pre-Computerized System)**

**2. Annual Review (pre-Computerized System)**

**3. IPE Amendment(s)**

**4. IPE**

**5. Certificate of Eligibility**

**Section 3 - Survey Data, Psychological, Educational, etc.**

**1. Intake Survey (top of Section 3)**

**2. Comparable Benefits Checklist (immediately below Intake for pre-Computerized System)**

**3. Resume**

**4. The following to be filed chronologically:**

**a. Grades**

**b. Financial Aid Form**

**c. All Referrals**

**d. Psychological**

**e. All Training Reports**

**f. Social Service Intake**

**Section 4 - Correspondence and Contracts**

**1. ALL Authorized Expenditure Cost sheets (immediately on top)**

**2. Closure Letter (immediately below cost sheets)**

**3. The following to be filed chronologically:**

**a. Request for Low Vision Aids**

**b. Release forms**

**c. Letters**

**d. Authorizations**

**e. Equipment transfers, etc.**

**4. SSA-1407 (on the bottom)**

**\*All paper case file documentation shall be maintained for periods of time that are stipulated in federal and state records retention rules and regulations and shall only be destroyed in a manner consistent with these requirements.\***

**Section 3. - Case Recording**

**Case recording is a very important responsibility of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. Case recording is written documentation of the professional work a Rehabilitation Counselor is doing and should be the best exhibit of that work. Good case recording should show that the rehabilitation process has been covered completely for each client. The narrative recording should be a running account of the development and progress of a case from referral to closure. This record should include the Counselor's appraisal and analysis of diagnostic materials; client needs; conferences with consultants, former and prospective employers; content, results and plans for future counseling interviews; arrangements made for securing information on, and induction into, treatment, training, etc.; and case status classification changes. These should be in chronological order with the date of each entry recorded. Since case recording serves as a record of activities related to the vocational rehabilitation process, the Counselor should have at least one case narrative entry every six months.**

**As a minimum, the \*electronic\*case record should contain:**

**[1.] \*a)\* Referral information. [(In Connecticut, Part 1 completed of the 911.)]**

**[2.] \*b)\* A \*scanned copy of the\* signed application or other document requesting \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] services \*with the original signed copy retained in the paper file\*.**

**[3.] \*c)\* Documentation that the individual has been advised of the confidentiality of all information pertaining to his or her case and the release of information on the basis of informed, written consent, and the opportunity for a review of [Counselor] determinations \*made by personnel of the Bureau\*.**

**[4.] \*d)\* Documentation supporting the determination that an individual has a significant disability or a most significant disability.**

**[5.] \*e)\*Documentation supporting eligibility determinations or the need for [an extended evaluation or] trial work experiences (with supports if needed), and the nature and scope of services to be provided during the [extended evaluation or] trial work experience.**

**[6.] \*f)\* Documentation of the periodic assessment of individual’s progress during [extended evaluation or] trial work periods.**

**[7.] \*g)\*Documentation specifying reasons for ineligibility (02-08) and documentation for a review of ineligibility not later than 12 months after this determination.**

**[8.] \*h) A scanned copy of the\* [The] IPE, and any amendments to the IPE, with documentation supporting the development of the employment goal and the nature and scope of services included in the individual's IPE and, for students with disabilities who are receiving special education services, the student's IEP. \*A paper copy of the IPE and any amendments with original client or authorized representative signature will be retained in the paper case folder.\***

**[9.] \*i)\* Data concerning an individual's eligibility for comparable benefits under any other program.**

**[10.] \*j)\* When physical or mental restoration services are provided, documentation [supporting the clinical status as stable or slowly progressive (except in a program of trial work experience)] \*of the provision of such services\*.**

**[11.] \*k)\* Documentation supporting any decision to provide services to family members.**

**[12.] \*l)\* In the event that an individual's IPE provides for services [or a job placement] in a non-integrated setting, a justification for that non-integrated setting.**

**[13.] \*m)\* Documentation of the periodic reviews and evaluations of progress toward achieving the employment goal.**

**[14.] \*n)\* In the event that an individual obtains competitive employment, verification that the individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage \*of the state where the client is employed\* and that the individual’s wages and level of benefits are not less than that customarily paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by non-disabled individuals.**

**[15.] \*o)\* Documentation of any plans for the provision of post-employment services, the basis on which the plans were developed, and a description of services provided and outcomes achieved.**

**[16.] \*p)\* Documentation as to the reason and justification for \*case\* closure [, including employment status, and, if closed in status 26, the basis on which employment was determined to be suitable].**

**[17.] \*q)\* Documentation of any reviews of a determination that an individual was no longer capable of achieving \*an employment outcome\* [a vocational goal for closures in status 08 from a trial work experience or for status 28 closures].**

**[18.] \*r)\* Documentation concerning any action and decision resulting from a request by an individual for review of a [Rehabilitation Counselor] determination \*made by personnel of the Bureau\*.**

**Section 4. - Civil Rights**

**The provision of Bureau services shall be based solely on eligibility criteria established in law and regulations[, rather than on other personal attributes such as age, race, sex, type of disability, ancestry, or national origin. All aspects of the rehabilitation program will comply with non-discrimination requirements]. \*No individual shall be excluded from participation in services or benefits due to race, color, religious creed, age, sex, marital status, national origin, ancestry, intellectual disability, physical disability, past or present history of mental disability, learning disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, civil union status, genetic information, or prior conviction of a crime.**

**In addition, the following factors cannot be used in determining eligibility for services, provision of services, or priority for services under an order of selection of eligible individuals.**

**a) Any duration of residency requirement, provided**

**the individual is present in the State;**

**b) race, color, religious creed, age, sex, marital status, national origin, ancestry, intellectual disability, physical disability, past or present history of mental disability, learning disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, civil union status, genetic information, or prior conviction of a crime;**

**c) Source of referral;**

**d) Type of expected employment outcome;**

**e) The need for specific services except for specific**

**services and equipment to maintain employment for individuals who do not meet the priority for services under an order of selection;**

**f) anticipated cost of services required by an individual; or**

**g) The income level of an individual or an individual's family.\***

**[Policy**

**The following practices and standards shall apply to every phase of administration of the vocational rehabilitation program including determination and certification of eligibility or ineligibility for vocational rehabilitation services and trial work experiences [or extended evaluations to determine rehabilitation potential. The application of this policy will be governed by a standard of reasonableness and all interpretations will be based on what is reasonably necessary and cost efficient when considering both the applicant or client and the entire client population.**

**Procedures**

**1. The Counselor must not discriminate against an applicant or client on the basis of religion, race, age, color, ancestry, sex, national origin, or type of disability.**

**2. No individual or group of individuals will be excluded or found ineligible solely on the basis of type of disability.**

**3. An individual with a disability, who meets basic eligibility requirements, cannot be determined ineligible on the basis of age.**

**4. No state residency requirements may be imposed which will exclude an otherwise eligible individual who is present and available for services.**

**If a Counselor has a question about the eligibility of an individual, the case should be reviewed with the supervisor prior to an eligibility decision. The outcome of this review and rationale for the decision should be recorded in the case record.**

**An applicant or client who relocates to another state should be encouraged to seek rehabilitation services in that state.]**

**Section 5. - Comparable [Benefits and] Services \*and Benefits\***

**\*Prior to providing an accommodation or auxiliary aid or service or any vocational rehabilitation services to an eligible individual or to members of the individual's family, the Bureau’s assigned Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must determine whether comparable services and benefits exist under any other program and whether those services and benefits are available to the individual unless such a determination would interrupt or delay:**

**a) The progress of the individual toward achieving**

**the employment outcome identified in the Individualized Plan for Employment;**

**b) An immediate job placement; or**

**c) The provision of vocational rehabilitation services to any individual who is determined to be at extreme medical risk, based on medical evidence provided by an appropriate qualified medical professional.**

**Exemptions:**

**The following vocational rehabilitation services are exempt from a determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits:**

**a) Assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs.**

**b) Counseling and guidance, including information**

**and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice.**

**c) Referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide workforce development system, if those services are not available.**

**d) Job-related services, including job search and**

**placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services.**

**e) Rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory, and other technological aids and devices.**

**f) Post-employment services.**

**Provision of services:**

**If comparable services or benefits exist under any other program and are available to the individual at the time needed to ensure the progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome in the individual's Individualized Plan for Employment, the Bureau must use those comparable services or benefits to meet, in whole or part, the costs of the vocational rehabilitation services.**

**If comparable services or benefits exist under any other program, but are not available to the individual at the time needed to ensure the progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome specified in the Individualized Plan for Employment, the Bureau must provide vocational rehabilitation services until those comparable services and benefits become available.\***

**[Policy**

**The Counselor must assure that before the VR program provides any vocational rehabilitation services to an individual or to members of that individual's family, he determines whether comparable services and benefits are available under any other program.**

**Comparable services and benefits mean services and benefits that are:**

**(a) provided or paid for, in whole or in part, by other federal, state, or local public agencies, by health insurance, or by employee benefits;**

**(b) available to the individual at the time needed to address the employment goal in the individual’s Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE); and**

**(c) commensurate to the services that the individual would otherwise receive from the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program.**

**Procedures**

**Prior to providing any vocational rehabilitation services, the Counselor is required to investigate and determine if there are any comparable services and benefits that would provide or pay for that service. If comparable benefits or services exist under any other program and are available to the eligible individual at the time needed to address the employment goal of the individual's IPE, they must be used to meet, in whole or part, the cost of vocational rehabilitation services. However, the following exceptions apply:**

**(a) if comparable services or benefits exist under any other program, but are not available to the individual at the time needed to support the employment goal in the individual’s IPE, the Counselor will provide vocational rehabilitation services until those comparable services and benefits become available.**

**(b) A prior determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits is not required in connection with the provision of any of the following services:**

**(1) Assessment for determining eligibility and priority for services.**

**(2) Assessment for determining vocational rehabilitation needs.**

**(3) Vocational rehabilitation counseling, guidance, and referral services.**

**(4) Vocational and other training services, such as personal and vocational adjustment training, books (including alternative format books accessible by computer and taped books), tools, and other training materials that are not provided in institutions of higher education (see Chapter 3).**

**(5) Placement services.**

**(6) Rehabilitation technology.**

**(7) Post-employment services.**

**In addition, comparable services and benefits need not be pursued if:**

**(a) the determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits under any other program would delay the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to any individual who is determined to be at extreme medical risk, based on medical evidence provided by an appropriate qualified medical professional; or**

**(b) an immediate job placement would be lost due to a delay in the provision of comparable services and benefits.**

**When an individual is eligible for any benefit to meet the cost of VR services, the benefit will be used to provide such services. In preparing the IPE, the Counselor will complete that part of the form that is applicable to the services being planned or provided. When authorizing expenditures using a comparable benefit the Counselor will indicate in the case narrative, the use of this source of funding for the service. When appropriate, the Counselor will review and monitor the comparable benefits and indicate any changes in the client's eligibility or ineligibility for comparable benefits. This review should be planned when expenditures for services are authorized.**

**Information**

**The following is a list of vocational rehabilitation services where full consideration of comparable services and benefits should be made unless the exemptions noted above apply:**

**1. Physical and mental restoration services, except in cases of extreme medical risk;**

**2. Training services in institutions of higher education including books, tools, and other training materials. Institutions of higher education include universities, colleges, community/junior colleges, vocational schools, technical institutes, or hospital schools of nursing;**

**3. Maintenance services;**

**4. Interpreter services for the deaf;**

**5. Rehabilitation teaching, orientation and mobility services for visually impaired persons;**

**6. Occupational licenses, tools, equipment, initial stocks, and supplies;**

**7. Transportation services in connection with rehabilitation services;**

**8. Telecommunication, sensory, and other technological devices;**

**9. Trial Work Experiences or extended evaluations;**

**10. Adaptive housing services;**

**11. Hospitalizations, surgeries and durable medical equipment;**

**12. Other goods and services that can reasonably be expected to benefit the applicant or client.**

**The following is a list of possible sources of comparable services and benefits. This list is not intended to be exhaustive. Counselors are encouraged to investigate and develop other resources.**

**PHYSICAL/MENTAL RESTORATION**

**Medicare**

**Medicaid (Title XIX)**

**Private medical insurance**

**Veteran's benefits**

**Worker's Compensation**

**Special education programs**

**Department of Mental Health (DMH)**

**Civic organizations**

**Private foundations**

**Social Security Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS)**

**Social Security Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE)**

**Health Services for Handicapped Children**

**TRAINING**

**Pell Grants**

**Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (SEOG)**

**College scholarships designated for and applied to tuition and fees or room and board.**

**Job Corps**

**Worker's Compensation**

**Private endowments**

**Veteran’s benefits**

**Social Security Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS)**

**Department of Mental Health (DMH)**

**Department of Mental Retardation (D.M.R.)**

**Department of Income Maintenance (D.I.M.) (Job Connection Program)**

**Department of Children and Families (DCF)**

**Adult Education**

**Job Partnership Training Act (J.P.T.A.)**

**Private long-term disability insurance benefits**

**MAINTENANCE**

**College scholarships and grant awards designated for and applied to tuition and fees or room and board.**

**General Assistance**

**Food Stamps**

**Social Security benefits (S.S.D.I. and S.S.I.)**

**Unemployment Compensation**

**Veteran's benefits**

**Worker's Compensation**

**Department of Income Maintenance (D.I.M.)**

**Department of Human Resources (D.H.R.)**

**City/town housing authority or State Department of Housing**

**MISCELLANEOUS GOODS AND SERVICES**

**Department of Human Resources (D.H.R.)**

**Department of Mental Health (DMH)**

**Department of Mental Retardation (D.M.R.)**

**Social Security Plans for Achieving Self Support (PASS) program**

**Social Security Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE) program**

**Conn. Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council (C.A.D.A.C.)**

**Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI)**

**Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (B.E.S.B.) Adult Services, Children’s Services**

**Non-Profit Disability Organizations (e.g., Heart Association, Muscular Dystrophy Association, Easter Seals, etc.)**

**Civic organizations**

**Religious organizations]**

**Section 6. - Confidentiality and Availability of Case Record**

**Information**

**[Policy]**

**All information, both medical and personal, given or made available to the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind shall be held confidential. Use of such information will be limited to purposes directly connected with the administration of an individual's rehabilitation program. Information will not be disclosed, directly or indirectly, to any individual, agency or organization without the individual's written consent or that of his or her parent, guardian, or representative if applicable unless:**

**[1)] \*a)\* sharing or releasing of information is needed to protect the client or another person from possible physical harm or violence;**

**[2)] \*b)\* the agency is ordered to share the information by a court order or subpoena; or**

**[3)] \*c)\* the information is required by mandatory reporting laws from the agencies that BESB reports to such as Rehabilitation Services Administration or the State Auditors of Public Accounts.**

**When information is requested but is not required by law to be released, the authorization to so release shall be obtained from the client or applicant, or their legal guardian, prior to release of the information. Medical, psychological, or other information which the Bureau believes may be harmful to the client or applicant may not be released directly to the client or applicant but must be provided to his or her designated representative and/or a physician or psychologist.**

**An individual receiving \*vocational rehabilitation services\* [VR service], or his or her parent, guardian, or representative if applicable, has the right to:**

**a) request in writing an appointment to review the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] case record with such appointment scheduled within ten (10) working days after receipt of a written request;**

**b) have copied (at cost) any part of the record with copies to be furnished within five (5) working days after receipt of a written request;**

**c) challenge the content of the record and request deletion or change with written notice of \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] action on such request to be furnished within ten (10) working days.**

**All clients, or their authorized representatives, shall receive written information in their preferred mode of communication and native language regarding the scope of confidentiality at the time of application for Vocational Rehabilitation Services, at the time of development of the Individualized Plan for Employment, and at the time of case inactivation notification. Such written information shall:**

**a) identify the agency authority to gather and collect information;**

**b) explain the intended purpose for using or releasing such information;**

**c) provide an explanation of whether the provision of information is mandatory or voluntary and the effect that withholding requested or required information will have on the rehabilitation process;**

**d) identify the situations where the agency does or does not require informed written consent of the individual before information may be released, and;**

**e) identify the other agencies to which information is routinely released.**

**[Procedures**

**1. All clients or their representatives shall be informed, at intake, that applicant and client information will be kept confidential to the extent required by law.**

**2. No applicant or client information may be released to or obtained from any other party, either orally or in writing, without the informed written consent of the client. A release of information form must be signed by the client.**

**3. Information regarding the diagnosis and treatment of a client's mental condition disclosed to another person or agency shall bear the following statement:**

**"The confidentiality of this record is required under Chapter 899, of the Connecticut General Statutes. This material shall not be transmitted to anyone without written consent or other authorization as provided in the aforementioned statutes."**

**4.] When personal information has been obtained from a third party (i.e., another agency or organization), it may be released only by, or under the conditions established by, that party. If that source has indicated that the information is not to be re-released, then the requester is to be referred back to the original source.**

**[5. All applicants, clients, and/or their representatives, are to be informed of the confidentiality of personal information and the conditions for accessing this information.**

**6. The Counselor must make all data in the case record accessible or release it to the client or the client's authorized representative when requested in writing. Requests must be honored within ten (10) working days of the receipt of the written request.**

**However, information] \*Information\* which the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor believes may be harmful to the client may not be disclosed directly to the client, but to the client's authorized representative, physician or licensed/certified psychologist [(see Information section)]. The determination of whether information would be harmful to the client must be made with input from the supervisory staff or the appropriate consultant. Clients must be advised of their right to appeal any denial of release of records. Furthermore:**

**a) An official of the Bureau shall be present at all inspections. This person will interpret the record, if appropriate.**

**b) A record shall be kept of the people who have seen the record. The client, parent or the client's authorized representative must sign the review form.**

**c) Psychological reports, clinical diagnoses, and subjective evaluations, when developed for a case study and when shared with other personnel are accessible. Routine medical and eye reports may be reviewed; however, copies will be generally furnished only with the written permission of the physician or optometrist.**

**d) The client, parents, or the client's authorized representative have the right to request and receive a copy, at cost, of any or all parts of their records. This copy will be furnished within five business days after receipt of a written request. A charge [will] \*may\* be made, based upon the prevailing rate for photocopying services \*but may be waived in cases of financial hardship or if the number of pages requested is 10 or fewer. Individualized Plans for Employment and any Amendments to the plan shall be provided at no cost to the client, parent or authorized representative.\***

**[Information**

**Confidential information includes:**

**- The fact that an individual is a client**

**- Names and addresses of clients**

**- Photographs of clients**

**- Medical (including psychiatric), psychological, vocational and educational information about clients**

**- Financial information about clients**

**- Data obtained from other individuals, agencies, or organizations about clients**

**- Any other information, whether contained in the case record or not, related to the client or his or her family.]**

**Case records must be protected at all times to insure confidentiality, and, unless authorized, should be accessible only to \*Vocational Rehabilitation Program\* [VR] staff. \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselors must insure that case records cannot be viewed by third parties, including other clients.**

**Section 7. - Informed Choice**

**[Policy]**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program shall [provide] \*inform\* each applicant, [including individuals who are receiving services during a trial work period or extended evaluation and each eligible individual] \*and recipient of services (including students with disabilities who are making the transition from programs under the responsibility of an educational agency to programs under the responsibility of the Bureau and including youth with disabilities), through appropriate modes of communication, about the availability of and opportunities to exercise informed choice, including the availability of support services for individuals with cognitive or other disabilities who require assistance in exercising informed choice throughout the vocational rehabilitation process.**

**Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors shall assist applicants and recipients of services in exercising informed choice:**

**a) in decisions related to the provision of assessment services;**

**b) for eligible individuals or, as appropriate, the individuals' representatives, in acquiring information that enables them to exercise informed choice in the development of their individualized plans for employment with respect to the selection of the:**

**(1) Employment outcome;**

**(2) Specific vocational rehabilitation services needed to achieve the employment outcome;**

**(3) Entity that will provide the services;**

**(4) Employment setting and the settings in which the services will be provided; and**

**(5) Methods available for procuring the services; and**

**(6) Ensuring that the availability and scope of informed choice is consistent with the obligations of the Bureau.**

**In assisting an applicant and eligible individual in**

**exercising informed choice during the assessment for**

**determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs and during development of the Individualized Plan for Employment, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will provide the individual or the individual's representative, or assist the individual or the individual's representative in acquiring, information necessary to make an informed choice about the specific vocational rehabilitation services, including the providers of those services, that are needed to achieve the individual's employment outcome. This information will include, at a minimum, information relating to the:**

**a) Cost, accessibility, and duration of potential services;**

**b) Consumer satisfaction with those services to the**

**extent that information relating to consumer satisfaction is available;**

**c) Qualifications of potential service providers;**

**d) Types of services offered by the potential providers;**

**e) Degree to which services are provided in**

**integrated settings; and**

**f) Outcomes achieved by individuals working with**

**service providers, to the extent that such information is available.**

**In providing or assisting the individual or the individual's representative in acquiring this information the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor may use, but is not limited to, the following methods or sources of information:**

**a) Lists of services and service providers.**

**b) Periodic consumer satisfaction surveys and**

**reports.**

**c) Referrals to other consumers, consumer groups, or**

**disability advisory councils qualified to discuss the**

**services or service providers.**

**d) Relevant accreditation, certification, or other**

**information relating to the qualifications of service**

**providers.**

**e) Opportunities for individuals to visit or experience various work and service provider settings.**

**The Bureau shall work with the Bureau of Administrative Support of DORS to explore options for developing and implementing flexible procurement policies and methods that facilitate the provision of vocational rehabilitation services and that afford**

**recipients of services meaningful choices among the methods used to procure vocational rehabilitation services.\***

**[(a) Each individual has the right to make an informed choice with regard to the selection of a long-term vocational goal, vocational rehabilitation services including assessment services and service providers. Each individual shall receive, through appropriate modes of communication, information concerning the availability and scope of informed choice, the manner in which informed choice may be exercised, and the availability of support services for individuals with cognitive or other disabilities who require assistance in exercising informed choice.**

**(b) In developing an individual's IPE, the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program shall provide to the individual or assist the individual in acquiring information necessary to make an informed choice about the specific services, including the providers of those services that are needed to achieve the individual's vocational goal. This information must include, at a minimum, information relating to the cost, accessibility, and duration of potential services, the consumer satisfaction with those services to the extent that information relating to consumer satisfaction is available, the qualifications of potential service providers, the types of services offered by those providers, and the degree to which services are provided in integrated settings.**

**Procedures**

**Informed Choice means choosing among options of vocational goals and objectives, choices of services and service providers, and jobs based upon an understanding of such options.**

**The Rehabilitation Act as amended in 1992 has established Informed Choice to be an integral part of the rehabilitation process. Vocational Rehabilitation programs are required to assure that persons with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, are given information and opportunities to choose their own goals and objectives, services, and service providers.**

**Furthermore, the Act requires that the IPE will include a statement by the consumer describing how the consumer was informed about, and involved in, choosing among alternative goals, objectives, services, and methods used to provide or purchase such services.**

**Each BESB client will be given the opportunity to make informed choices related to the following:**

**- selection of a long-term vocational goal, consistent with the individual’s unique strengths, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests;**

**- vocational rehabilitation services (including assessments). Information provided about these services should be related to cost, duration, accessibility, and consumer satisfaction of services whenever possible;**

**- service providers. Information should be related to qualifications of potential service providers, types of services provided; and**

**- the level and type of support that they want and need (amount, location, and duration of supports).**

**Each of the choices made by the client will be recorded on the IPE.**

**The client is to be aware that he/she has the right to make changes related to these choices at any time within the VR process. Additionally, the client is able to make choices with regards to the Counselor assigned to the case, location of meetings, and individuals who are invited to case meetings.**

**Furthermore, each client will be aware of their options for resolving any disagreements with BESB/VR beginning with talking with the State Director, and including other options such as the Client Assistance Program (CAP), and the fair hearing process.**

**The options used to make a choice will be developed by the Counselor and the client jointly in order to empower the client to make decisions resulting in a successful vocational rehabilitation outcome. Information regarding the goals, services, and service providers will be researched and discussed as a cooperative effort between the Counselor and the client (and any other representative that the client chooses to be involved).**

**It is the Counselor's responsibility to identify options based on knowledge and expertise and to clearly present this information to the client making sure that the options are understood. If a client has a cognitive impairment that hinders their ability to make an informed decision, or to understand information presented, it is the Counselor's responsibility to ensure that the client is given assistance in exercising informed choice. The type of assistance needed can vary depending on the type of impairment, but may include involving a family member or other authorized representative in meetings with the client. It is the responsibility of the Counselor to ensure that the client receives the assistance that is right for them.**

**The client is responsible for exploring the options and asking questions about any information or option presented, and to add information to the discussion.**

**It will be the responsibility of BESB VR staff to ensure that each and every client is informed about their right to make informed choices.]**

**Section 8. - Order of Selection**

**\*a) Requirements and Implementation\***

**When funding projections indicate that the Vocational Rehabilitation Program cannot provide services to all eligible individuals, Federal Law requires the Program to establish an order to be followed for selecting eligible individuals to whom vocational rehabilitation services shall be provided on the basis of serving first, individuals with the most significant disabilities.**

**Individuals who \*were receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services as a student with a disability prior to being determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, eligible individuals who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment, or those individuals who\* have [an] \*already begun receiving services under an\* Individualized Plan for Employment [that has been implemented] \*prior to the effective date of the Bureau’s order of selection\*, shall not be impacted by a decision of the [agency] \*Bureau\* to enter into an order of selection and shall continue to receive services as \*required for pre-employment transition planning or as\* outlined in the Individualized Plan for Employment or subsequent amendments.**

**An order of selection consists of priority categories to which eligible individuals are assigned based on the significance of their disability. Under an order of selection, individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected first for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. An “individual with a significant disability” is defined as an individual with a disability –**

* **Who has a severe physical or mental impairment which seriously limits one or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome;**
* **Whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time; and**
* **Who has one or more [listed] physical or mental disabilities \*resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, blindness, burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, deafness, head injury, heart disease, hemiplegia, hemophilia, respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, musculoskeletal disorders, neurological disorders (including stroke and epilepsy), spinal cord conditions (including paraplegia and quadriplegia), sickle cell anemia, intellectual disability, specific learning disability, end stage renal disease\*, or another disability or combination of disabilities determined on the basis of an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs to cause comparable substantial functional limitation.**

**The degree of significance of disability is directly related to the number of functional categories that are impacted by the presence of a disability.**

**The functional categories are:**

**Mobility - Unable to effectively use conventional modes of transportation. Requires assistive devices. Due to disability, is unable to travel alone in unfamiliar places. Regularly requires one or more of the following to get around the community: modifications, adaptive technology, accommodations, assistance (personal or device). Range of travel is severely limited.**

**Motor Skills - Unable to use upper extremity(ies) to obtain, control, and use objects. Unable to control and coordinate fine and/or gross motor movements. Unable to perform at a competitive work pace. Loss of use of dominant upper extremity.**

**Self-Care - Places self or others at risk due to deficits in decision-making, reasoning, or judgment. Is unable to perform normal activities of daily living -such as hygiene, cooking, shopping, and money management without assistance. Requires assistance on the job for personal needs. Requires extra attention or monitoring to prevent accident or injury. Unable to adjust to changes in daily routine or new situations.**

**Self-Direction - Unable to work independently. Requires supervision on a frequent or ongoing basis to begin and carry through with goals and plans.**

**Work Skills - Unable to identify logical steps necessary to reach goals. Unable to remember and understand instructions. Unable to learn new tasks without intensive and/or specialized instructions. Unable to follow written/verbal instructions. Requires significant accommodations or rehabilitation technology to participate in training to develop work skills.**

**Interpersonal Skills - Social withdrawal/isolation. Has significant difficulty interpreting and responding to behavior and communication of others. Work history includes recent negative references, firings, or multiple short-term jobs, or other evidence of work adjustment problems.**

**Communication - Unable to participate in conversation without accommodation or assistive technology. Expressive and receptive primary mode of communication is unintelligible to non-family members or general public. Unable to access printed/visual information without assistive technology and/or accommodation. Unable to understand telephone conversation even with amplification.**

**In the event that the State Director determines that insufficient funds exist to serve all eligible individuals, \*in addition to all students with disabilities who are receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services prior to being determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, this information shall be communicated to the\* [and after consulting with and considering the recommendations from the] State Rehabilitation Council, the Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services and the Advisory Board, \*for their consideration and recommendations. A duly noticed public comment period and public hearing that allows for input on any proposed modification(s) to the applicable section of the Unified State Plan or Bureau policies to address the projected funding shortfall shall be provided. Should no alternatives be identified to ensure adequate funding to resolve the projected shortfall\* the decision shall be implemented to put an order of selection in place, serving first those individuals determined to have the most significant disabilities.**

**In order to determine who is eligible for services based on an Order of Selection, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will complete a Functional Assessment Inventory for Priority \*for\* [of] Services during the eligibility for services process. The Priority Category under Order of Selection will be determined based upon the results of the Functional Assessment for Priority of Service.**

**\*b) Priority for Service Categories\***

**The Priority \*for\* [of] Service Categories are as follows:**

**Category 1 - Defined as an individual with [the] \*a\* most significant [disabilities] \*disability\*, resulting in serious limitations in terms of an employment outcome in at least one of the areas outlined in four or more of the identified functional categories. An individual in this category would require at least five vocational rehabilitation services over a period of eighteen months.**

**Category 2 - Eligible individuals with more significant disabilities that result in serious limitations in terms of an employment outcome in at least one of the areas outlined in three of the identified functional categories. An individual in this category would require at least four vocational rehabilitation services over a period of one year.**

**Category 3 - Eligible individuals with significant disabilities that result in serious limitations in terms of an employment outcome in at least one of the areas outlined in two of the identified functional categories. An individual in this category would require at least three vocational rehabilitation services over a period of six months.**

**Category 4 - An eligible individual with a disability whose disability results in a limitation in terms of an employment outcome in at least one of the areas outlined in any one of the identified functional categories. An individual in this category would require at least one vocational rehabilitation service over a period of six months.**

**\*c) Referral Services\***

**\*Eligible individuals, including individuals\* [Individuals] who do not meet the open categories of the order of selection shall be notified of the availability of referral services to other service providers who may be of assistance in helping the individual to \*prepare for, secure, retain, advance in or regain\* [achieve] employment. Information and referral services will include providing vocational rehabilitation information and guidance to assist the individual in accessing these providers. Included will be notification of the availability of \*counseling and referral for job placement services from Federal and State Programs, as well as\* services under the State Workforce [Investment] \*Development\* System, and any other State, Federal or private providers best suited to address the individual’s employment needs. When making a referral, the [Agency] \*Bureau\* will provide the individual with a notice of the referral, information about the specific point of contact at the program, information and advice on the most suitable services for assisting the individual to prepare for, secure, retain \*,advance in,\* or regain employment.**

**The [Agency] \*Bureau\* will keep a record of those individuals who have received referral services as a result of not meeting order of selection criteria. A copy of all referral letters to other providers will be maintained in the individual’s record of services. All information contained in the letter of referral drafted by the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor shall only be released to third party providers with the expressed written consent of the individual.**

**\*d)\* Functional Assessment for Priority \*for\* [of] Services \*Client Form\***

**\*To Be Completed at Eligibility Determination\***

**Background: When funding projections indicate that the Vocational Rehabilitation Program cannot provide services to all eligible individuals, Federal Law requires the Program to establish an order to be followed for selecting eligible individuals to whom vocational rehabilitation services shall be provided on the basis of serving first, individuals with the most significant disabilities.**

**Priority under order of selection will be determined based upon the results of this Functional Assessment for Priority of Service. Individuals who have [an] \*already begun receiving services under an\* Individualized Plan for Employment [that has been implemented] \*prior to the effective date of the Bureau’s order of selection\*, shall not be impacted by a decision of the [agency] \*Bureau\* to enter into an order of selection and shall continue to receive services as outlined in the Individualized Plan for Employment or subsequent amendments. Your [vocational counselor] \*Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor\* will complete this form and notify you of which Priority of Service category you have been assigned based upon the results of this document.**

**You will be provided with a copy of the completed document in your preferred communication mode.**

**You have the right to appeal the outcome of this assessment or to request a reassessment at any time, per Vocational Rehabilitation Policy.**

**The Priority \*for\* [of] Service Categories are as follows:**

**Category 1 - Defined as an individual with [the] \*a\* most significant [disabilities] \*disability\*, resulting in serious limitations in terms of an employment outcome in at least one of the areas outlined in four or more of the identified functional categories. An individual in this category would require at least five vocational rehabilitation services over a period of eighteen months.**

**Category 2 - Eligible individuals with more significant disabilities that result in serious limitations in terms of an employment outcome in at least one of the areas outlined in three of the identified functional categories. An individual in this category would require at least four vocational rehabilitation services over a period of one year.**

**Category 3 - Eligible individuals with significant disabilities that result in serious limitations in terms of an employment outcome in at least one of the areas outlined in two of the identified functional categories. An individual in this category would require at least three vocational rehabilitation services over a period of six months.**

**Category 4 - An eligible individual with a disability whose disability results in a limitation in terms of an employment outcome in at least one of the areas outlined in any one of the identified functional categories. An individual in this category would require at least one vocational rehabilitation service over a period of six months.**

**Functional Categories**

**Directions: Enter a “Y” for yes to items within each category where client self-reporting, \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor observation and documentation from applicable sources such as physicians, low vision practitioners, rehabilitation teachers, mobility instructors, etc. substantiate a significant functional limitation that verifies the inability of the individual to perform the particular task.**

**Mobility: This category considers ability to independently travel between locations. This category factors in physical limitations as well as cognitive limitations that may interfere with independent travel.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to use conventional modes of public transportation such as bus or ADA paratransit.**

**\_\_\_\_ Requires assistive devices such as a cane or dog guide to travel between two points in unfamiliar areas.**

**\_\_\_\_ Due to disability, is unable to travel alone in unfamiliar places.**

**\_\_\_\_ Even with the provision of a cane, dog guide or other adaptive mobility device, is disoriented in environments previously traveled.**

**\_\_\_\_ Range of travel is severely limited due to physical limitations resulting from secondary disabilities.**

**\_\_\_\_ Other adaptive mobility device is required for mobility (walker, wheelchair, scooter).**

**Motor Skills: Motor Skills represent the ability to move arms and coordinate movement to accomplish a task, such as picking up an object.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to use either upper extremity to grasp objects.**

**\_\_\_\_ Able to grasp objects with one upper extremity, but only after repeated attempts.**

**\_\_\_\_ Able to grasp objects with at least one upper extremity, but cannot place the object at a particular location.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to use upper extremity(ies).**

**\_\_\_\_ Has significant neuropathy in hands, lack of normal sensation.**

**Self-Care: This category considers ability to care for one’s self and to perform specific daily grooming and hygiene tasks.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to independently shower or take a bath.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to use a toilet independently.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to apply deodorant, brush teeth, clip nails independently.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to independently feed self, even if meals are prepared by others.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to prepare basic meals that require no cooking, such as preparing sandwiches or cereal.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to use a microwave oven to heat up prepared foods.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to safely use stove, oven or range top to prepare hot foods.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to use laundry machines to wash and dry clothing.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to select clothing appropriate for weather conditions.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to dress self independently.**

**\_\_\_\_ Requires monitoring to prevent accident or injury in home or daily environment.**

**\_\_\_\_ Requires monitoring to prevent accident or injury in unfamiliar settings.**

**Self-Direction: This category considers ability to make decisions in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to adjust to minor changes in daily routine or new situations unless intensive instruction is provided and repeated.**

**\_\_\_\_ Due to limited reasoning skills, places self or others at safety or health risk.**

**\_\_\_\_ Requires a paid caregiver, volunteer or family member to oversee tasks and activities to ensure completion.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to perform multi step activities or tasks, even with direct supervision on a frequent or ongoing basis.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to perform single tasks, unless direct supervision is present to oversee all aspects of the single task.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to follow verbal instructions.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to follow written instructions.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to follow instructions given in electronic format.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to prioritize activities in order of sequence or importance, i.e., steps involved in arranging for a ride to get somewhere.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to make decisions independently.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to independently participate in job seeking activities.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to identify denominations of money consistently.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to use a checkbook or other bill paying option such as On-Line Checking.**

**Work Skills: This category considers ability to perform activities and tasks that result in wages or earnings.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to identify logical steps necessary to complete multi-step work tasks that involve three or more sequential activities.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to remember and understand verbal instructions necessary to complete simple, single step work tasks.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to remember and understand written instructions necessary to complete simple, single step work tasks.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to remember and understand verbal instructions necessary to complete multi-step work tasks.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to remember and understand written instructions necessary to complete multi-step work tasks.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to learn new tasks without intensive and/or specialized instructions, such as job coaching.**

**\_\_\_\_ Requires hand over hand instruction to complete basic work tasks.**

**\_\_\_\_ Requires significant, extensive accommodations or rehabilitation technology devices to complete 90 percent or more of work activities.**

**Interpersonal Skills: This category considers ability to interact with other individuals or groups of individuals.**

**\_\_\_\_ Individual has significant difficulty interpreting and responding to behavior and communication of others.**

**\_\_\_\_ Individual engages in offensive or inappropriate communication, such as verbal outbursts, unprovoked yelling, or harassing statements.**

**\_\_\_\_ Individual engages in offensive or inappropriate nonverbal behavior such as uninvited touching, prolonged staring or groping self or others.**

**\_\_\_\_ Work history includes recent negative references, firings, or multiple short-term jobs, or other evidence of work adjustment problems.**

**Communication: This category considers the ability to participate in conversations without accommodation or assistive technology.**

**\_\_\_\_ Speech cannot be understood by family members or close friends.**

**\_\_\_\_ Speech cannot be understood by passers by or those communicating with person for the first time.**

**\_\_\_\_ No audible speech exists.**

**\_\_\_\_ Only minimal speech such as single words or short phrases can be understood by family members or close friends.**

**\_\_\_\_ Only minimal speech such as single words or short phrases can be understood by passers by or those communicating with the person for the first time.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to communicate in written format, such as handwriting, Braille or electronic documents via email.**

**\_\_\_\_ Can only communicate in written formats such as handwriting, Braille or electronic documents via email in single sentences or phrases.**

**\_\_\_\_ If no intelligible speech exists, unable to utilize alternative communication such as sign language or communication board to converse with others.**

**\_\_\_\_ If no intelligible speech exists, can only communicate using sign language or communication board to converse with others.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to understand telephone conversation even with amplification.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to use a telephone to communicate emergency instructions.**

**\_\_\_\_ Unable to use a TTY machine to communicate emergency instructions.**

**BESB – Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

**Functional Assessment for Priority \*for\* [of] Services - Worksheet**

**Client:**

**SSN:**

**Date:**

**Category Limitations Identified Total Questions**

**Mobility \*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ out of\* 6**

**Motor Skills \*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ out of\* 5**

**Self-care \*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ out of\* 12**

**Self-direction \*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ out of\* 13**

**Work Skills \*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ out of\* 8**

**Interpersonal \*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ out of\* 4**

**Communication \*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ out of\* 12**

**Priority \*for\* [of] Service Category: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Section 9. - Purchase of Services**

**[Policy]**

**Services and goods including those necessary for the determination of eligibility and priority for services, vocational rehabilitation services which are part of the individual's IPE, post-employment services, and other goods and services required to achieve an employment outcome must be purchased according to State purchasing procedures and requirements. All purchases must be authorized in writing prior to or at the time of purchase, unless unusual or unforeseen circumstance makes this impossible or impractical. The State Director shalI review such situations where preauthorization of services was not possible or practical and make a final determination regarding approval in such instances. Payment for such purchases will be based upon fee schedules established by the State, DORS, \*or published fees charged to all participants of the program or service\*[BESB, and/or the VR Services Program].**

**[Procedures]**

**Written authorization will be made, either simultaneously with or prior to the purchase of services, and a copy of the authorization will be retained. Where a \*Vocational Rehabilitation Program\* [VR] employee is permitted to make an oral authorization in an emergency situation, prompt documentation of such oral authorization shall be made in the client's case record and such authorization shall be confirmed in writing and forwarded to the provider of the services \*within ten (10) business days\*.**

**All authorization\*s\* for case services are initiated by the Counselor to whom the case is assigned [by means of Form BESB 2]. The State Director may establish criteria for direct purchasing approvals by \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselors and \*the Vocational Rehabilitation\* Supervisor that [will] \*do\* not require the review and approval of the Director. [It must be pointed out, however, that regardless of these authorization privileges, the] \*The\* final authority for commitment of funds rests with the State Comptroller. [Counselors should therefore avoid as much as possible any oral promises for authorization of services. All situations involving the provision of services that were not preauthorized will be brought to the attention of the Director, along with information about the reason(s) that made it impossible or impractical to make prior authorization. The Director will base a determination of approval on the applicability of the service to the individual’s IPE, and whether circumstances beyond the control of the Counselor resulted in the lack of a prior authorization.**

**[In an emergency situation where a designated VR employee is permitted to make oral authorizations, prompt documentation and written authorization must be sent to the service provider within ten working days. Counselors will be held accountable for any verbal commitments to vendors or service providers in those cases where this procedure is not followed.]**

**Section 10. - Review of [Rehabilitation Counselor] Determinations \*Made by Personnel of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program\***

**[Policy]**

**An applicant or eligible individual who is dissatisfied with any determinations made by [a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor] \*personnel of the Vocational Rehabiliation Program that affects the provision of vocational rehabilitation services\* [concerning the furnishing or denial of services]**  **may request, \*** **or, if appropriate, may request through the individual’s representative\* a timely review of those determinations. \*All applicants and eligible individuals shall be informed of this right at the time the individual applies for vocational rehabilitation services, at the time the individual is assigned to a category under an order of selection, at the time the IPE is developed, and whenever vocational rehabilitation services for an individual are reduced, suspended, or terminated. Notification of the availability of the Client Assistance Program, to assist the applicant or eligible individual during mediation sessions or impartial due process hearings shall be provided. The names and addresses of individuals with whom requests for mediation or due process hearings may be filed shall be included in this notification.**

**Each applicant or eligible individual shall have the right to obtain a review of determinations that affect the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to an applicant or eligible individual through an impartial due process hearing or to pursue mediation with respect to determinations made by personnel of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program that affect the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to an applicant or eligible individual. The individual may also request informal dispute resolution through a review by the State Director of the determinations made by personnel of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program that affect the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to an applicant or eligible individual.**

**Each applicant or eligible individual or, as appropriate the individual’s representative will be provided with an opportunity to submit during mediation sessions, impartial due process hearings or informal dispute reviews, evidence and other information that supports the applicant’s or eligible individual's position; and be allowed to be represented by counsel or other advocate selected by the applicant or eligible individual.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Program may not institute a suspension, reduction, or termination of vocational rehabilitation services being provided to an applicant or eligible individual, including evaluation and assessment services and IPE development, pending a resolution through mediation, pending a decision by a hearing officer, or pending informal dispute resolution under this Section unless the individual or, in appropriate cases, the individual’s representative requests a suspension, reduction, or termination of services, or the Bureau has evidence that the services have been obtained through misrepresentation, fraud, collusion, or criminal conduct on the part of the individual or the individual’s representative. Applicants who are found ineligible for vocational rehabilitation services and previously eligible individuals who are determined to be no longer eligible for vocational rehabilitation services are permitted to challenge the determinations of ineligibility.**

**a) Impartial due process hearings**

**A hearing conducted by an impartial hearing officer, selected in accordance with these policies, must be held within 60 days of an applicant’s or eligible individual’s request for review of a determination made by personnel of the Bureau that affects the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to the individual, unless informal dispute resolution or a mediation agreement is achieved prior to the 60th day or the parties agree to a specific extension of time. In addition to the rights described in these policies, the applicant or eligible individual or, if appropriate, the individual’s representative must be given the opportunity to present witnesses during the hearing and to examine all witnesses and other relevant sources of information and evidence. The costs of the impartial due process hearing will be paid by the Bureau. The Bureau will not pay for any costs related to the representation of an applicant or eligible individual.**

**The impartial hearing officer must make a decision based on the provisions of the approved vocational rehabilitation services section of the Unified State Plan, the Act, Federal vocational rehabilitation regulations, and State regulations and policies that are consistent with Federal requirements, and provide to the individual or, if appropriate, the individual's representative and to the State Director a full written report of the findings and grounds for the decision within 30 days of the completion of the hearing.**

**The impartial hearing officer for a particular case must be selected from a list of qualified impartial hearing officers maintained by the Bureau. Impartial hearing officers included on the list must be jointly identified by the Bureau and the State Rehabilitation Council and must be selected on a random basis, or be selected by agreement between the State Director of the Bureau and the applicant or eligible individual or, as appropriate, the individual’s representative.**

**If either of the parties to the impartial due process hearing are dissatisfied with the decision of the impartial hearing officer, the party may seek an impartial administrative review of the decision by the Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services. A request for this administrative review must be made within 20 days of the mailing of the impartial hearing officer's decision. The Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services may not delegate this review and will provide both parties with an opportunity to submit additional evidence and information relevant to a final decision concerning the matter under review. The Commissioner may not overturn or modify the hearing officer's decision, or any part of that decision, that supports the position of the applicant or eligible individual unless the Commissioner concludes, based on clear and convincing evidence, that the decision of the impartial hearing officer is clearly erroneous on the basis of being contrary to the approved vocational rehabilitation services portion of the Unified State Plan, the Act, Federal vocational rehabilitation regulations, or State regulations and policies that are consistent with Federal requirements.**

**The Commissioner of the agency will make an independent, final decision following a review of the entire hearing record and provide the decision in writing, including a full report of the findings and the statutory, regulatory, or policy grounds for the decision, to the applicant or eligible individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative and to the Bureau within 30 days of the request for administrative review.**

**b) Mediation**

**The mediation process is voluntary on the part of the applicant or eligible individual. The mediation process will not be used to deny or delay the applicant's or eligible individual's right to pursue resolution of the dispute through an impartial hearing held within sixty (60) days of the date of the written request from the client, or if appropriate, the individual’s representative. At any point during the mediation process, either party or the mediator may elect to terminate the mediation. In the event mediation is terminated, either party may pursue resolution through an impartial hearing.**

**The mediation process is conducted by a qualified and impartial mediator, who must be selected from a list of qualified and impartial mediators maintained by the State. For an individual to be considered as a qualified mediator, he or she must not be an employee of a public agency (other than an administrative law judge, hearing examiner, or employee of an institution of higher education), cannot be a member of the Bureau's State Rehabilitation Council, and has not been involved previously in the vocational rehabilitation of the applicant or eligible individual. Mediators must be selected on a random basis by agreement between the State Director of the Bureau and the applicant or eligible individual or, as appropriate, the individual’s representative and also in accordance with a procedure established in the State for assigning mediators, provided this procedure ensures the neutrality of the mediator assigned.**

**The mediator must be knowledgeable of the vocational rehabilitation program and the applicable federal and state laws, regulations and policies governing the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, and has been provided with training in effective mediation techniques consistent with any State-approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other requirements. The mediator must have no personal, professional, or financial interest that could affect the individual’s objectivity during the mediation proceedings. For purposes of this policy, an individual shall not be considered to be an employee of a public agency solely because the individual is paid by the agency to serve as a mediator.**

**Mediation sessions are scheduled and conducted in a timely manner and are held in a location and manner that is convenient to the parties to the dispute. Discussions that occur during the mediation process must be kept confidential and may not be used as evidence in any subsequent impartial due process hearings or civil proceedings, and the parties to the mediation process may be required to sign a confidentiality pledge prior to the commencement of the process. An agreement reached by the parties to the dispute in the mediation process must be described in a written mediation agreement that is developed by the parties with the assistance of the qualified and impartial mediator and signed by both parties. Copies of the agreement must be sent to both parties.**

**The costs of the mediation process will be paid by the Bureau. The Bureau will not pay for any costs related to the representation of an applicant or eligible individual authorized.**

**c) Informal dispute resolution**

**An applicant, eligible individual or, in appropriate cases, the individual’s representative may request of the State Director an informal dispute resolution review for resolving a dispute without conducting mediation or a formal hearing. The applicant or eligible retains the right to an impartial due process hearing or any other right provided under this policy, including the right to pursue mediation. If informal dispute resolution or mediation is not successful in resolving the dispute within sixty (60) days of the date of the written request from the client, or if appropriate, the individual’s representative, a formal hearing must be conducted within that same time period, unless the parties agree to a specific extension of time.**

**d) Civil action**

**Any of the parties who disagrees with the findings and decision of an impartial hearing officer or a subsequent determination by the Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services has a right to bring a civil action with respect to the matter in dispute. The action may be brought in any State court of competent jurisdiction or in a district court of the United States of competent jurisdiction without regard to the amount in controversy. In any action brought under this subsection, the court must receive the records related to the impartial due process hearing and the records related to the administrative review process, if applicable. The court will hear any additional evidence at the request of a party and base its decision on the preponderance of the evidence, grants the relief that the court determines to be appropriate.\***

**[The client must make a written request for a review of the decision that was made by the Rehabilitation Counselor, and state in the written request the nature of the matters to be addressed in the review. The Bureau may not institute a suspension, reduction, or termination of services being provided under an Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE) pending a review, unless the individual or in appropriate cases, the individual's representative, so requests, or the Bureau has evidence that services have been obtained through misrepresentation, fraud, collusion or criminal conduct on the part of the individual.**

**A) Review Options**

**1. Informal Resolution:**

**A client may seek an informal review of a Rehabilitation Counselor decision by sending a written request to the State Director of the Bureau. This review will be conducted within forty-five days of receipt of the written request for such a review. The purpose of an informal review is to offer clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program an option for timely resolution of disputed decisions. However, the option to conduct an informal review in place of a hearing by an impartial hearing officer may not be used as a means of delaying a more formal hearing. If informal resolution is not successful in the case of an individual who has made a written request for a hearing by an informal hearing officer, the formal hearing must be conducted by the end of this same period, unless the parties jointly agree to a delay.**

**2. Mediation:**

**Mediation is an informal, voluntary dispute resolution process in which a neutral third party, the mediator, helps the disputing parties to reach an agreement. The mediator has no power to impose a decision on the parties. The Agency will maintain a pool of mediators who are familiar with the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, and who will be available to conduct mediation sessions. Clients who request a fair hearing must be informed that they also have the opportunity to request mediation as an option for resolution. However, the parties will enter mediation only if both the client and the Bureau agree to mediation. Conversations that take place during the mediation process must be kept confidential. Anything that is said during the mediation process that would not otherwise be known cannot be used as evidence in any future hearings or civil proceedings. The parties to the mediation process may be required to sign a confidentiality statement prior to the commencement of such process. The Bureau will bear the cost of the mediation process.**

**Each session in the mediation shall be scheduled in a timely manner, within forty-five days of the date of the written request from the client, and shall be held in a location that is convenient to both parties in the dispute. Any agreement reached by the parties to the dispute in the mediation process shall be set forth in written mediation agreement. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program shall not deny any other rights afforded to the individual under Title I of the Act as a result of a request to participate in the mediation process, or during mediation.**

**3. Formal Hearing Procedures:**

**A hearing by an impartial hearing officer must be held within forty-five days of the receipt of the written request for such a review, unless informal resolution was achieved prior to the expiration of the time period or the parties jointly agree to a delay.**

**The individual or, if appropriate, the individual's representative shall be afforded an opportunity to present evidence, information, and witnesses to the impartial hearing officer, to be represented by counsel or other appropriate advocate, and to examine all witnesses and other relevant sources of information and evidence.**

**The impartial hearing officer shall make a decision based on the provisions of the approved State Plan, the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, and federal and state vocational rehabilitation regulations and policies. The impartial hearing officer shall provide a full written report of the findings and grounds for the decision within thirty days of the hearing to the individual or, if appropriate, the individual's representative and to the State Director. The decision of the impartial hearing officer shall be final.**

**4. Appeal:**

**Any party aggrieved by a final decision of the impartial hearing officer may bring a civil action for a review of the decision. The action may be brought to any state court of competent jurisdiction, or in a district court of the United States of competent jurisdiction, without regard to the amount in controversy.**

**B) Selection of Impartial Hearing Officers or Mediators**

**The impartial hearing officer or a mediator for a particular case must be selected:**

**(1) From among the pool of persons qualified to be an impartial hearing officer or mediator who are identified jointly by the Bureau and the State Rehabilitation Council; and**

**(2) (A) on a random basis; or**

**(B) by agreement between the State Director and the individual or, if appropriate, the individual's representative. A hearing officer or mediator may not be selected to participate in more than one review for the same individual.**

**C) Informing Affected Individuals**

**The Agency shall inform, through appropriate formats of communication, all applicants and eligible individuals of:**

**(1) the right to an informal review, mediation, or hearing by an impartial hearing officer, including the names and addresses of individuals with whom appeals may be filed or mediations established;**

**(2) the manner in which an impartial hearing officer or mediator will be selected;**

**(3) the right to appeal a final decision of the impartial hearing officer through a civil action that may be brought to any state court of competent jurisdiction, or to a district court of the United States of competent jurisdiction without regard to the amount in controversy;**

**(4) the availability of assistance through the Client Assistance Program, including the contact persons, address and telephone numbers.**

**Such notification will be provided in written format to the individual at the time that application is made for vocational rehabilitation services, at the time of development of the Individualized Plan of Employment, and upon reduction, suspension or cessation of vocational rehabilitation services.]**

**Section 11. - Rights and Responsibilities**

**[Policy]**

**All applicants for and recipients of \*Vocational Rehabilitation Services\* [VR services] must be informed of their rights and responsibilities.**

**[Procedures]**

**Applicants and clients play an active role in the rehabilitation process. This requires that they be knowledgeable of their legal rights as well as what is expected of them. Clear and prompt notification of rights and responsibilities empowers clients to be full participants in the planning and delivery of rehabilitation services.**

**\*a)\*[1]. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor will provide a written notice of rights and responsibilities and availability of the Client Assistance Program (CAP). The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor will review these with each applicant/client at the following key points in the vocational rehabilitation process:**

**\*(1)\* [-] application (initial interview)**

**\*(2) When assigned to a Priority for Services Category if the Vocational Rehabilitation Program is operating under an Order of Selection.\***

**\*(3)\*[-] IPE development**

**\*(4)\* [-] closure**

**\*(5) Whenever vocational rehabilitation services for an individual are reduced, suspended, or terminated.\***

**\*b)\*[2]. These rights and responsibilities must be provided to the parent or guardian of any client who, a) has not reached the age of eighteen, or b) has a court-appointed guardian.**

**\*c)\*[3]. Client rights include, as appropriate:**

**\*(1)\*[a]. an evaluation of eligibility**

**\*(2)\*[b]. notification of the eligibility decision**

**\*(3)\*[c]. if eligible, participation in the development of the IPE and any amendment or change in their rehabilitation program**

**\*(4)\*[d]. annual review of the IPE**

**\*(5)\* [e]. review of information in the case record \*of services\***

**\*(6)\*[f]. confidentiality**

**\*(7)\*[g]. the appeal of Bureau actions concerning provision or denial of services**

**\*(8)\*[h]. the right of appeal to the Superior Court under Section 4-183 of the Connecticut General Statutes**

**\*(9)\*[i]. the availability of the Client Assistance Program**

**\*(10)\*[j]. non-discrimination**

**\*(11)\*[k]. a clear explanation of policies and procedures**

**\*(12)\*[l]. a request for a change of \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor**

**If a client requests a change of \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor, the client should be instructed to contact the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Supervisor [or State Director], who will [determine] \*assess\* if a change is warranted and so notify the client. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor\* [State Director] may require a client to make such a request in writing in order to fully assess and evaluate the situation prior to granting a change of \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor.**

**It is the responsibility of clients to cooperate in carrying out their rehabilitation program and to make reasonable efforts to attain their rehabilitation objectives and goals. Applicants/clients have the following responsibilities, as appropriate:**

**a) assist in obtaining information needed to determine eligibility and develop the IPE;**

**b) carry out their role in the development and implementation of the IPE;**

**c) attend scheduled appointments, training sessions, and other authorized services;**

**d) not promise payment for services from a third party vendor without prior authorization by the \*Bureau\*[agency];**

**e) attain acceptable grades or ratings at training and other appropriate activities;**

**f) carry forth medical or other professional instructions as applicable to their rehabilitation program;**

**g) notify the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor of change of address or telephone numbers;**

**h) discuss with the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor any problems or changes that may occur during the IPE.**

**The Client Assistance Program may assist in explaining client rights and responsibilities.**

**Failure to assume these responsibilities may result in \*delays in the provision of services\* [and could lead to ineligibility for further services to the extent that such failure tends to make an employment outcome unlikely].**

**Section 12. - Scope of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

**\*a) Pre-Employment Transition Services.**

**In collaboration with the local educational agencies involved, the Bureau will provide, or arrange for the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for all students with legal blindness or visual impairment, without regard to the presence or type of any secondary disability. Fifteen (15) percent of the federal Title I Vocational Rehabilitation allotment, including any funds received through the re-allotment process, must be reserved for the exclusive use of providing Pre-ETS.**

**A “student with a disability” is an individual not younger than age 16, (unless a younger age for Pre-employment transition service is identified in the IEP of the individual by the Planning and Placement Team), and not older than age 21, who has legal blindness or visual impairment (with or without a secondary disability) and who is participating in a secondary, post-secondary or other recognized education program, and who is eligible for and receiving special education or related services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).**

**Pre-Employment Transition Services are available on a statewide basis to all students with legal blindness or visual impairment, regardless of whether the student has applied or been determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. Pre-Employment Transition Services include:**

**(1) Job exploration counseling;**

**(2) Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment in the community to the maximum extent possible;**

**(3) Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;**

**(4) Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and**

**(5) Instruction in self-advocacy (including instruction in person-centered planning), which may include peer mentoring (including peer mentoring from individuals with disabilities working in competitive integrated employment).**

**Upon satisfying the projected need for reserved Pre-ETS funding for all students with legal blindness or visual impairment (including students with secondary disabilities), as supported by the results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, the Bureau may utilize the remainder of the reserved Pre-ETS funds for the following services:**

**(1) Implementing effective strategies to increase the likelihood of independent living and inclusion in communities and competitive integrated workplaces;**

**(2) Developing and improving strategies for individuals with legal blindness or visual impairment, in combination with intellectual disabilities and individuals with significant disabilities to live independently; participate in post-secondary education experiences; and obtain, advance in and retain competitive integrated employment;**

**(3) Providing instruction to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, school transition personnel, and other persons supporting students with disabilities;**

**(4) Disseminating information about innovative, effective, and efficient approaches to achieve the Pre-ETS requirements;**

**(5) Coordinating activities with transition services provided by local educational agencies under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;**

**(6) Applying evidence-based findings to improve policy, procedure, practice, and the preparation of personnel, in order to better achieve the goals of this section;**

**(7) Developing model transition demonstration projects;**

**(8) Establishing or supporting multistate or regional partnerships involving States, local educational agencies, the Bureau in collaboration with other designated State units, developmental disability agencies, private businesses, or other participants to achieve Pre-ETS goals; and**

**(9) Disseminating information and strategies to improve the transition to post-secondary activities of individuals who are members of traditionally unserved and underserved populations.**

**Vocational Rehabilitation staff assigned to serve students with disabilities shall be available to attend individualized education program meetings for these students, to work with the local workforce development boards, one-stop centers, and employers to develop work opportunities for the students, including internships, summer employment and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year, and apprenticeships. Assigned staff will also work with schools, including those carrying out activities under section 614(d) of the IDEA, to coordinate and ensure the provision of Pre-ETS services. When invited, Vocational Rehabilitation staff assigned to work with students with disabilities may also attend person-centered planning meetings for individuals receiving services under title XIX of the Social Security Act.\***

**\*b)\* [(a)] Policy for Services Provided to Individuals \*who have applied for or been determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services\***

**As appropriate to the vocational rehabilitation needs of each individual and consistent with each individual's \*Individualized Plan for Employment\* [informed choice], the following vocational rehabilitation services shall be available \*to assist the eligible individual in preparing for, securing, retaining, advancing in or regaining an employment outcome that is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice:**

**(1)\* [1]. Assessment for determining eligibility, priority for services, and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology.**

**\*(2)\* [2]. \*Vocational rehabilitation counseling\* [Counseling] and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice.**

**\*(3)\* [3]. Referral and other services to secure needed services from other providers and agencies \*including other components of the statewide workforce development system, and to advise those individuals about the Client Assistance Program.**

**(4)\* [4]. Job related services including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow up services and follow-along services.**

**[5. Diagnosis and treatment for mental and emotional disorders by personnel who meet state licensure laws.**

**6. Physical and mental restoration services including**

**diagnosis and treatment, prosthetic and orthotic devices, eyeglasses and visual services as prescribed by qualified personnel who meet state licensure laws and who are selected by the individual, and to the extent that financial support is not readily available from a source (such as health insurance or comparable benefit), hospitalizations and corrective surgeries to correct or substantially modify a physical or mental condition that constitutes a substantial impediment to employment. Corrective surgery or therapeutic treatment must be of such a nature that it is expected to correct or modify the impediment to employment within a reasonable length of time.]**

**\*(5). Physical and Mental restoration services, to the extent that financial support is not readily available from a source other than the Bureau (such as through health insurance or a comparable service or benefit).**

**(6). Vocational and other training services, including personal and vocational adjustment training, advanced training in, but not limited to, a field of science, technology, engineering, mathematics (including computer science), medicine, law, or business); books, tools, and other training materials, except that no training or training services in an institution of higher education (universities, colleges, community or junior colleges, vocational schools, technical institutes, or hospital schools of nursing or any other post-secondary education institution) may be paid for with Vocational Rehabilitation Program funds unless maximum efforts have been made by the Bureau and the individual to secure grant assistance in whole or in part from other sources to pay for that training.\***

**[7. Vocational and other training services, including personal and vocational adjustment training, books, tools, and other training materials, except that no training or training services in an institution of higher education may be paid for with funds under this part unless maximum efforts have been made by the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program to secure grant assistance in whole or in part from other sources to pay for that training. Training may be provided at schools, colleges, universities, community rehabilitation programs, by tutor or correspondence, apprenticeship, an organized on-the-job training situation, agency staff and consultants, or some other organized training program that is approved by the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program to provide such training. The Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program may use existing fee schedules established by other agencies. In addition, the Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services may establish individual rates with providers of services.]**

**\*(7)\* [8]. Maintenance \*in the form of monetary support provided to an individual for expenses, such as food, shelter and clothing, that are in excess of normal expenses of the individual and that are necessitated by the individual’s participation\* [for additional costs incurred while participating] in assessments for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation \*needs or the individual’s receipt of vocational rehabilitation\* services under an IPE.**

**\*(8)\* [9]. Transportation \*(travel and related expenses) necessary to enable the applicant or eligible individual to participate in vocational rehabilitation services, including expenses for training in the use of public transportation vehicles and systems\* [in connection with the rendering] of any vocational rehabilitation service needed by the individual to achieve an employment outcome].**

**\*(9)\* [10]. Vocational rehabilitation services to family members of an applicant or eligible individual if necessary to enable the applicant or eligible individual to achieve an employment outcome.**

**\*(10)\* [11]. Interpreter services and tactile interpreting services for individuals who are [deaf-blind] \*deafblind, provided by qualified personnel.\***

**\*(11)\* [12]. Reader services, rehabilitation teaching services, and orientation and mobility services.**

**\*(12)\* [13]. Technical assistance and other consultation services to conduct market analyses, develop business plans, and otherwise provide resources, to the extent that such resources are authorized to be provided through the statewide workforce [investment] \*development\* system to eligible individuals who are pursuing self-employment or telecommuting or establishing a small business operation as an employment outcome.**

**\*(13)\* [14]. Supported employment services \*including ongoing supports, customized employment, and other appropriate services needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability, including youth with a most significant disability in supported employment\*.**

**\*(14)\* [15]. [On the job or related personal] \*Personal\* assistance services \*including training in managing, supervising and directing personal assistance services, provided by one or more persons, that are designed to assist the client to perform daily living activities on or off the job that the individual would typically perform without assistance if the client did not have a disability, and that are designed to increase the client’s control in life and ability to perform everyday activities on or off the job\* while the individual is receiving other services \*necessary to achieve an employment outcome.\* [consistent with the IPE].**

**\*(15)\* [16]. Post-employment services \*provided subsequent to the achievement of an employment outcome and that are necessary\* to assist the individual to \*maintain\* [retain], regain or advance in employment \*consistent with the individual’s unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice\*.**

**\*(16)\* [17.] Occupational licenses, tools, equipment, initial stocks, and supplies consistent with Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program policy. [For persons entering into self-employment ventures, the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program may pay such costs as are reasonable for the client to enter self-employment. Refer to Chapter 3 (Case Process, Policies, and Procedures, Section 10 (Vocational Rehabilitation Services)].**

**\*(17)\* [18]. Rehabilitation technology, including vehicular modifications, telecommunications, sensory, and other technological aids and devices. The provision of adaptive equipment will be made after consultation with a Rehabilitation Technologist or other provider skilled in the assessment of such products. Reports from vendors who sell specific adaptive products will not be acceptable for evaluation purposes, but may be reviewed along with other data. Technology provided to clients will be chosen based on the most effective, least expensive products available. [Refer to Chapter 3 (Case Process, Policies, and Procedures, Section 10 (Vocational Rehabilitation Services)].**

**\*(18)\* [19]. Transition services for students \*and youth with legal blindness or visual impairment, age 14 through 21 that [to] facilitate \*the transition from school to post-secondary life, such as achievement of an employment outcome in competitive integrated employment, or Pre-Employment Transition Services for students.\* [the achievement of an employment outcome identified in the IPE.]**

**\*(19) Technical assistance and other consultation services to conduct market analyses, develop business plans, and otherwise provide resources, to the extent those resources are authorized to be provided through the statewide workforce development system, to eligible individuals who are pursuing self-employment or telecommuting or establishing a small business operation as an employment outcome.**

**(20) Customized employment in a competitive and integrated setting and that is based on an individualized determination of the unique strengths, needs, and interests of the individual with a significant disability and that is designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer.**

**(21)\* [20]. Other goods and services determined necessary for the individual with a disability to achieve an employment outcome.**

**\*c)\* [b)] Policy for Services Provided to Groups of Individuals**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Program is authorized to provide services to groups of individuals to promote integration and competitive employment. Such services need not be related to the Individualized Plan for Employment of any one individual, but rather serve to benefit \*groups of individuals with disabilities\* [many individuals who are seeking to achieve employment outcomes consistent with the Rehabilitation Act]. Examples of services to groups include the establishment, development or improvement of \*public or other nonprofit\* community rehabilitation programs \*that are used to provide vocational rehabilitation services that promote integration into the community and prepare individuals with disabilities for competitive integrated employment, including supported employment and customized employment.\* [, including under] \*Under\* special circumstances, the construction of \*a facility for a public or nonprofit\* community rehabilitation \*program.\* [facilities (consistent with the provisions of the State Plan and the Rehabilitation Act) that are used to provide services to promote integration and competitive employment.] \*Examples of special circumstance include destruction by natural disaster of the only available center serving the area of the state.\***

**Services to groups may also include:**

**\*(1)\* [1)]. The provision of telecommunication systems including telephone, television, satellite, \*tactile-vibratory devices and similar systems\* [radio and similar systems] that have the potential for substantially improving \*vocational rehabilitation\* service delivery methods \*and developing appropriate programming to meet the particular needs\* [for groups] of individuals who are legally blind \*or visually impaired\*;**

**\*(2)\* [2]. Special services to provide nonvisual access to information for individuals who are blind; including the use of telecommunications, Braille, sound recordings, or other appropriate media; captioned television, films, or video cassettes, tactile or vibratory materials \*and devices\* for individuals who are \*deafblind\* [deaf/blind];**

**\*(3)\* [3]. Technical assistance [and support services] to businesses that are \*seeking to employ individuals with disabilities.\* [not subject to title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and that are seeking to employ individuals with disabilities.]**

**\*(4)\* [4]. \*In the case of any small\* [Small] business enterprises operated by individuals with legal blindness, [the operation of which can be improved by the management services and supervision of the program along with the acquisition of vending facilities or other equipment and initial stock and supplies.] \*under the supervision of the Bureau, including enterprises established under the Bureau’s Business Enterprise Program, management services and supervision provided by the Bureau along with the acquisition of vending facilities or other equipment, initial stocks and supplies, and initial operating expenses, in accordance with the following requirements:**

**(A) Management services and supervision includes inspection, quality control, consultation, accounting, regulating, in-service training, and related services provided on a systematic basis to support and improve small business enterprises operated by individuals with significant disabilities. Management services and supervision may be provided throughout the operation of the small business enterprise.**

**(B) Initial stocks and supplies includes those items necessary to the establishment of a new business enterprise during the initial establishment period, which may not exceed six months.**

**(C) Costs of establishing a small business enterprise may include operational costs during the initial establishment period, which may not exceed six months.**

**(D) If the Bureau provides for these services, it must ensure that only individuals with significant disabilities will be selected to participate in this supervised program.**

**\*(5) Consultation and technical assistance services to assist State educational agencies and local educational agencies in planning for the transition of students and youth with disabilities from school to post-secondary life, including employment.**

**(6) Transition services to youth with disabilities and students with disabilities who may not have yet applied or been determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, for which a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor works in concert with educational agencies, providers of job training programs, providers of services under the Medicaid program under title XIX of the Social Security Act, entities designated by the State to provide services for individuals with developmental disabilities, centers for independent living (as defined in section 702 of the Rehabilitation Act), housing and transportation authorities, workforce development systems, and businesses and employers. These specific transition services are to benefit a group of students with disabilities or youth with disabilities and are not individualized services directly related to an Individualized Plan for Employment goal. Services may include, but are not limited to, group tours of universities and vocational training programs, employer or business site visits to learn about career opportunities, career fairs coordinated with workforce development and employers to facilitate mock interviews and resume writing, and other general services applicable to groups of students with disabilities and youth with disabilities.**

**(7) The establishment, development, or improvement of assistive technology demonstration, loan, reutilization, or financing programs in coordination with activities authorized under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998 to promote access to assistive technology for individuals with disabilities and employers.**

 **(8) Support (including, as appropriate, tuition) for advanced training in a field of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (including computer science), medicine, law, or business, provided after an individual eligible to receive services under this paragraph demonstrates such eligibility, has previously completed a bachelor’s degree program at an institution of higher education or scheduled completion of such a degree program prior to matriculating in the program for which the individual proposes to use the support; and who has been accepted by a program at an institution of higher education in the United States that confers a master’s degree in a field of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (including computer science), a juris doctor degree, a master of business administration degree, or a doctor of medicine degree. No training provided at an institution of higher education may be paid for with funds under this program unless maximum efforts have been made by the Bureau to secure grant assistance, in whole or in part, from other sources to pay for such training. Nothing in this paragraph prevents the Bureau from providing similar support to individuals with disabilities within the State who are eligible to receive support under the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.**

**Documentation shall be maintained to ensure the proper and efficient administration of services to groups of individuals, including the types of services provided, the costs of those services, and, to the extent feasible, estimates of the numbers of individuals benefiting from those services. The Bureau shall follow all State contracting and purchasing requirements in securing services from fee for service providers.\***

**[c) Program Development**

**If funding is available, VR will make such funds available to organizations that desire to submit proposals for programs that will assist groups of individuals to prepare for employment. In instances where VR has funds available for such activities, all known agencies and providers of services to persons who are legally blind will be notified in writing of the availability along with a description of the stated purpose. Request for proposals will be accepted according to state and federal guidelines. Only proposals submitted by the application deadline will be accepted for review.**

**Proposals will need to include stated goals, objectives, and methods to achieve the goals and objectives. The proposal will need to indicate how groups of individuals who are legally blind will benefit in terms of preparing for employment. Staffing patterns and projected time frames for each objective will be included in the proposals. Cost allocations for the proposal grant will also be detailed.**

**The State Director will review and award the funding to the organizations that are best able to meet the stated goals and objectives.**

**Although cost benefit will be a consideration, the ability of an organization to respond to the needs of persons who are legally blind will also be a factor. Organizations with prior history of successful service delivery to persons who are legally blind will be given higher consideration than organizations with no prior such activities. In the event that no known organizations who work with persons that are legally blind are able to submit a proposal acceptable to the State Director, then VR can choose to either advertise the proposal or choose to revoke the offer until such time as an organization with direct experience is available to submit a proposal.**

**An organization that has successfully been awarded program funding will be expected to follow all rules of nondiscrimination in hiring, maintain a drug free work place, and adhere to rules of confidentiality. The grantee will submit written, signed statements that ensure such adherence, and copies will be retained at this Agency. The grantee will submit quarterly reports and proposal reports each program year, detailing progress made toward achieving each objective. Cost expenditures will be detailed in these reports, which will be received and monitored by the State Director.**

**d) Community-Based Technology Laboratories**

**VR will seek to enter into cooperative agreements with employers, community rehabilitation providers, educational facilities and independent living centers to establish Adaptive Technology Laboratories within regions of this state. A representative of the host location will sign a cooperative agreement with VR stipulating that the equipment will be made available for persons who are legally blind to participate in evaluations and training to prepare for occupations where adaptive technology is used. VR will agree to purchase and maintain the adaptive technology. Such cooperative agreements will remain in effect so long as the host facility continues to provide a secure location for the equipment provided, and the equipment remains available for use by clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program during the normal business hours of the host facility.**

**Procedures**

**Counselors will make clients and/or their representatives aware of the VR Program's scope of services. In addition, Counselors should refer to more complete information on the provision of these services in Chapter 3 and other parts of this manual.]**

**[Section 13. - Use of Clerical Staff and Special Assistants to the Blind**

**VR Clerical Staff**

**The VR Clerical Staff is responsible for providing secretarial services in the following areas on behalf of the VR Counselors:**

**1. Authorizations for services;**

**2. Changes of address;**

**3. Preparation of low vision requests;**

**4. Handling telephone messages when the Counselor is out of the office; and**

**5. Recording time-off requests and time-and-effort data.**

**Special Assistants Assigned to the Vocational**

**Rehabilitation Program**

**In accordance with job specifications, the Special Assistants to the Blind receive assignments from their immediate supervisor. When assigned to work for a VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher, the Special Assistant is responsible for performing the following duties:**

**1. Driving to appointments;**

**2. Acts as a sighted guide for the VR Counselor or teacher;**

**3. Reads all material applicable to the VR process;**

**4. Handles telephone messages when appropriate;**

**5. Assists the VR Counselor in filling out:**

**a. RSA-911 forms;**

**b. IPEs;**

**c. Eligibility and ineligibility forms;**

**d. Notates changes in the case record of services;**

**e. Schedules appointments; and**

**f. Other related work as required.**

**In the event that the Special Assistant has completed his or her work assignments for the VR Counselor, the Special Assistant will report to the supervisor for a new work assignment.]**

**CHAPTER 3 - CASE \*PROCESSING\* [PROCESS,] POLICIES[, AND PROCEDURES]**

**Section 1. - Vocational Rehabilitation Status System**

**a) \* Status Summaries\* [Federal Definitions]:**

**\*Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors shall utilize the following status codes within the electronic case management system to note the progression of assigned clients through the Vocational Rehabilitation Program process.\*[The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) had established a status system after the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to assist states in reporting on client service delivery. This “status” system enabled RSA to track trends for Congress. Reported below are the definitions of these statuses. In an agreement with the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation in 1997, several of these statuses have been “retired”. They are listed below for historical purposes, and to reference case file documentation. It is acknowledged that the current computerized case management system references these statuses for ease in tracking, and the operational guidelines referenced in section b immediately following should be utilized by Counselors as a guideline for the service delivery process.]**

**Status 00 - Referral [(retired)]**

**This status represents entrance into the vocational rehabilitation process. A referral is defined as any individual who has applied to or been referred to the vocational rehabilitation agency by letter, by telephone, by direct contact, or by any other means; and for whom the following minimum information has been furnished: name and address, disability, age and sex, date of referral, and source of referral. \*Upon receiving a referral, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will contact the client either personally, by telephone, or by letter for the purpose of setting up an appointment for an initial interview.\***

**Status 02 - Applicant**

**As soon as the referred individual (Status 00) signs a document requesting vocational rehabilitation services, \*the individual\* [he] is placed into Status 02 and is designated as an applicant. Generally, the document will be a \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] application form, but a letter signed by an individual, or his or her representative, who provides the minimum basic referral information and requests service should also be considered as a basis for placing the individual in Status 02. [This is important since the applicant must be notified in writing if his or her request for vocational rehabilitation services has been denied and the only certain basis for determining that the individual has knowledge of having been referred is by the existence of a document signed by the individual.] \*The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will explain the vocational rehabilitation process to the applicant, and provide information on the Bureau’s appeal options and Client Assistance Program in the client’s preferred format. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will then commence an assessment, utilizing existing information to the greatest extent possible, to make a determination of eligibility.**

**Status 06- Trial Work Period**

**Cases are placed in Status 06 when there is insufficient information to reach an eligibility decision. While in Status 06, the client is provided with the opportunity to participate in multiple work experiences, including experiences in which the individual is provided appropriate supports and training, so that the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the client can explore the individual's abilities, capabilities, and capacity to perform in competitive and integrated work situations.\***

**Status 08 - Closed From Referral, Applicant, [Extended Evaluation Status] or Trial Work Period**

**This status [has been provided to furnish a means for identifying] \*is used for\* all \*individuals who do not proceed into eligibility status\* [persons not accepted] for vocational rehabilitation services, [whether closed] from referral status (00), applicant status (02), [extended evaluation] or trial work period (06). [All persons processed through referral, applicant, extended evaluation and/or trial work period, and not accepted into the active caseload for vocational rehabilitation services, will be closed in this status.] A certificate of ineligibility is required for a closure in Status 08, \*when such a determination has been reached subsequent to satisfying all policy requirements pertaining to ineligibility. The client will be provided, in their preferred communication format, ten (10) business days advanced notification of the reason(s) for the proposed action, along with information on the Bureau’s appeal options and the Client Assistance Program.\* [except when the client becomes unavailable for services. A copy of the RSA-911 form, properly shall be completed, dated, and signed is sufficient certification of ineligibility for these cases, provided case documentation includes specific detailed reasons for the closure action.]**

**Status 10 - Eligible for Services**

**A person is eligible for services if they have a physical or mental impairment, which for such individual constitutes or represents a substantial impediment to employment and the individual can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from vocational rehabilitation services. While a client is in this status, the \*Functional Assessment for Priority for Services form is completed, and the client is informed of the category within the Priority for Services that has been assigned to their case. The client will be provided with information on the Bureau’s appeals process and the Client Assistance Program in their preferred mode of communication. If the Bureau is not operating under an Order of Selection when the client is determined eligible for services, or the client meets the Priority for Services category if the Bureau is operating under an Order of Selection, the process of developing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) will commence.\* [case study and comprehensive assessment (if needed) is completed to provide a basis for the formulation of the Individualized Plan for Employment. A comprehensive case study is basic to determining the nature and scope of services to be provided in order to accomplish the vocational rehabilitation objective of the individual. The Counselor and client formulate and plan the rehabilitation services necessary to the solution of the client's situation, and those services are clearly outlined to him or her. The individual remains in this status until his or her rehabilitation program is written and approved.]**

**\*Status 12- Individualized Plan for Employment**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and client will develop, or the client may choose an alternative option for developing an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) identifying the employment goal, along with the services that will be provided, the vendors that will provide those services, and the timeframes associated with each of these services that will lead to the achievement of an employment outcome. The client will be placed into Status 12 when the IPE has been signed by the client or their authorized representative, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (and the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor in situations where graduate school is included in the IPE or the IPE was developed with a Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor. The client will be provided with information on the Bureau’s appeals process and the Client Assistance Program in their preferred mode of communication.**

**Status 18 - Vocational Services Implemented**

**This status is used when the client commences any of the services identified in the IPE, or subsequent amendment to the IPE in situations where none of the services from the original IPE were implemented. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will be responsible for maintaining appropriate case recording documenting the type of training, the progress of the service(s), and the final outcome. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will evaluate the progress of the client on an ongoing basis while in the services status.**

**Status 22 - In Employment**

**Once the client has obtained, retained or advanced in employment, and services detailed in the IPE and any subsequent amendments to the IPE are completed, or deemed by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the client to no longer be necessary, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will place the case in Status 22. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will monitor the case for a minimum of 90 days after the completion of substantial services in order to ensure that there is no further need or request for additional services to achieve the employment outcome.**

**Status 24 - Services Interrupted**

**When a durational situation develops that prevents the client from participating in the provision of services as outlined in the IPE or subsequent amendments to the IPE, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will place the case in Status 24 signifying that services are temporarily interrupted due to specific circumstances or conditions. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will monitor the case and make appropriate case recordings indicating the client's situation. The client will be provided with information on the Bureau’s appeals process and the Client Assistance Program in their preferred mode of communication. Upon resolution of the durational situation that precluded participation in services, the client’s services will resume in the applicable status category.**

**Status 26 – Employment Outcome Achieved**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will place a client in this status after all policy requirements for achievement of an employment outcome in a competitive and integrated setting have been satisfied. The client will be provided advanced notification in their preferred mode of communication of the intent to place the case into this status, with an opportunity to review this decision with the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor prior to the action occurring. The client will be provided with information on the Bureau’s appeals process and Client Assistance Program in their preferred mode of communication simultaneous to the provision of notification of intent to place the case in this status.**

**Status 28 – Closure Without Achievement of an Employment Outcome after IPE Development**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will place a client in this status after all policy requirements for such a decision have been satisfied. The reason for the decision to inactivate the case prior to the completion of the Individualized Plan for Employment or achievement of an employment outcome will be documented. The client will be provided advanced notification in their preferred mode of communication of the intent to place the case into this status, with an opportunity to review this decision with the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor prior to the action occurring. The client will be provided with information on the Bureau’s appeals process and Client Assistance Program in their preferred mode of communication simultaneous to the provision of notification of intent to place the case in this status.**

**Status 30 – Closure After Eligibility Determination, Prior to IPE Implementation**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will place a client in this status after all policy requirements for such a decision have been satisfied. The reason for the decision to inactivate the case prior to initiation of services under an Individualized Plan for Employment will be documented. The client will be provided advanced notification in their preferred mode of communication of the intent to place the case into this status, with an opportunity to review this decision with the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor prior to the action occurring. The client will be provided with information on the Bureau’s appeals process and Client Assistance Program in their preferred mode of communication simultaneous to the provision of notification of intent to place the case in this status.**

**Status 32 - Post-employment Services**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will place the case in Status 32 when**  **the case was previously closed in Status 26, but where the client requires one or more vocational rehabilitation services subsequent to the achievement of an employment outcome that are necessary for the individual to maintain, regain, or advance in employment, consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. These services are available to meet rehabilitation needs that do not require a complex and comprehensive provision of services and are limited in scope and duration. If more comprehensive services are required, then a new rehabilitation effort should be considered.**

**Status 34- Closed in Post- employment, Case to be Reopened for New Eligibility Determination**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will place the case in Status 34 when**  **the case was previously closed in Status 26, but where, through an assessment while the client is in Post-employment services, it is determined that the client requires a complex and comprehensive provision of services to maintain, regain, or advance in employment, consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. The client will be provided with information on the Bureau’s appeals process and Client Assistance Program in their preferred mode of communication simultaneous to the provision of notification of intent to place the case in this status.**

**Status 36- Closed in Post-employment when Post-Employment IPE services are completed**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will place the case in Status 36 when**  **the case was previously opened in Status 32, and where the client has completed Post-employment services that were necessary for the client to maintain, regain, or advance in employment, consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. The client will be provided with information on the Bureau’s appeals process and Client Assistance Program in their preferred mode of communication simultaneous to the provision of notification of intent to place the case in this status.**

**Status 40- Closed in Post-employment, not able to maintain employment, no more vocational rehabilitation services needed.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will place the case in Status 40 when**  **the case was previously opened in Status 32, but where the client is not available to complete Post-employment services that were necessary for the client to maintain, regain, or advance in employment, consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice, or where the provision of services was unsuccessful in helping the client to maintain, regain or advance in employment. The client will be provided with information on the Bureau’s appeals process and Client Assistance Program in their preferred mode of communication simultaneous to the provision of notification of intent to place the case in this status.\***

**[Status 10 to 24 –Active Caseload Status**

**Active caseload status begins with the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (Status 10). A client is placed in Status 12 when his or her Individualized Plan for Employment has been approved. Status 14, 16, and 18 are the in service status (now retired) and are provided for case progress designations to indicate the kind or kinds of services given to the client to prepare him for employment. Status 14 indicates counseling and guidance only; Status 16 designates physical and mental restoration; and Status 18 is the training status. A client is placed in Status 20 (now retired) when he has completed training and is ready for employment. Status 22 indicates the client has been placed in employment. Status 24, service interrupted, is recorded if services are interrupted while the client is in one of the Status 14, 16, 18, 20, or 22.**

**Status 26 - Closed Rehabilitated**

**Cases closed as rehabilitated must, at minimum, have been declared eligible, have received [appropriate diagnostic and related services, have had a program for vocational rehabilitation services formulated, have completed the program insofar as possible, have been provided counseling as an essential rehabilitation service, and have been determined to be suitably employed for a minimum of 90 days after the completion of substantial services.**

**Status 28 - Closed Other Reasons After Individualized Plan for Employment Initiated**

**Cases closed in this category must have been declared eligible, have received appropriate diagnostic and related services and have had a program for vocational rehabilitation services formulated, but have not completed the program and/or have not been provided with counseling, and/or have not been determined to be suitably employed for a minimum of 90 days.**

**Status 30 - Closed - Other Reasons Before Individualized Plan for Employment Initiated**

**Cases closed in this category are those cases which although accepted for rehabilitation services, did not progress to the point that rehabilitation services were actually initiated under a rehabilitation plan.**

**Status 32 - Post-employment Services**

**Cases in this category are those cases which, although closed subsequent to the achievement of an employment outcome, require additional services to maintain, regain or advance in employment, consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests.**

**b) Operational Requirements, by Status, for VR Counselors**

**There are eighteen status classifications under the caseload status coding structure beginning with Status 00 and ending with Status 34. The following is a synopsis of the various case functions that the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is required to perform when moving the case from one status to another.**

**Status 00 - Referral:**

**Upon receiving a referral, the Counselor will contact the client either personally, by telephone, or by letter for the purpose of setting up an appointment for an initial interview.**

**Status 02 - Applicant:**

**The Counselor, having explained vocational rehabilitation services, rights of appeal, and furnishing the client with information on the Client Assistance Program, will sign and have the client sign the application for vocational rehabilitation services; and the case will then be placed in Status 02. The Counselor will then commence the preliminary assessment, gathering information necessary to make a determination of eligibility. Such information may include medical, psychological, and ophthalmological data to the extent that such data is necessary to reach an eligibility decision. To the greatest extent possible, existing data will be used for purposes of determining eligibility for services.**

**Status 10 - Acceptance:**

**Cases are placed in Status 10 once they have met all eligibility requirements. (Please refer to section on Eligibility.) The VR Counselor will complete and sign a certificate of eligibility.**

**Status 12 - Individualized Plan for Employment:**

**The Counselor and client will prepare an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) indicating the specific vocational goal of the client. All IPEs will be reviewed and signed by the rehabilitation supervisor or other designee as identified by the State Director. While in Status 12, the Counselor will explore use of comparable benefits and services (see Sec. 5). For those cases where the IPE involves post-secondary education or vocational training, the VR Counselor will have a Financial Aid form (BESB 100) completed (see Sec. 10). The Counselor will prepare a case narrative documenting the development of the IPE and depicting the various action steps to be taken.**

**Status 14 - Service Status:**

**The Counselor may use this status when the only service being provided is counseling and guidance. Counselor will document the purpose and scope of the counseling being provided as it relates to the overall vocational objective.**

**Status 16 - Physical Restoration:**

**Cases may be placed in Status 16 when physical restoration services are the primary service being provided as a part of the vocational rehabilitation process. Counselor will identify and document the specific physical restoration services being provided along with the final outcomes and prognosis.**

**Status 18 - Vocational Training:**

**When a client is receiving vocational training, this status may be used. The Counselor will monitor the case while in Status 18. The Counselor will be responsible for maintaining appropriate case recording documenting the type of training, the progress of training, and the final outcome. Counselor will evaluate the progress of the client on an ongoing basis while in the training status.**

**Status 20 - Ready for Employment:**

**This status may be used when the primary service being provided is job development and career placement, consistent with the IPE.**

**Status 22 - In Employment:**

**Once client has been placed in an employment situation, the VR Counselor will place the case in Status 22 preparing a case narrative identifying the type of employment, the wages the client is earning, along with any other pertinent information. The Counselor will monitor the case for a minimum of 90 days after the completion of substantial services in order to assure that the client has been successfully placed and there are no issues that will interfere with employment. The Counselor will document significant activities that transpire while the client is in Status 22. For clients who are employed (including those individuals in the category of homemaker) at the time of application and need vocational rehabilitation services to maintain employment, this status may be used after the provision of substantial services that enable the client to maintain their current employment.**

**Status 24 - Services Interrupted:**

**When a particular situation develops that interferes with client's progress in the provision of services as outlined in the IPE, Counselor will place the case in Status 24 signifying that services are temporarily interrupted due to specific circumstances or conditions. Counselor will monitor the case and make appropriate case recordings indicating client's progress.**

**Status 32 - Post-employment Services:**

**The Counselor will place the case in Status 32 when post-employment services are to be rendered (see section on Post-employment Services).]**

**\*b)\* [c) [Case Management Activities (]Time in Status[)**

**[i. Time in Status]**

**In order to assure proper case management practices and to comply with \*federal law and regulations governing the administration of vocational rehabilitation services\* [the Rehabilitation Act], the following \*timelines shall apply\* [goals and objectives have been implemented]:**

**\*(1)\* [1]. The length of time for a case to remain in Status 00 will not exceed 60 calendar days unless the client \*requests or\* agrees to an extension \*and\* [or] the case record of services provides documentation of the client’s current \*situation that prevents immediate participation\* [inavailability to participate] in Vocational Rehabilitation Services.**

**\*(2)\* [2]. The length of time for a case to remain in Status 02 will not exceed 60 calendar days.**

**\*(3)\* [3]. The length of time for a case to remain in Status 10 will not exceed [six (6) months] \*ninety days\*, [or whatever federal law or regulation otherwise requires, except in extenuating circumstances] \*unless the client and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor mutually agree to a specific extension of that deadline to a specific date by which the IPE must be completed,\* as supported by documentation in the case record of services. [All high school students will have an IPE in place prior to graduation.]**

**\*(4)\* [4]. The length of time for implementation of the Individualized Plan for Employment (moving from Status 12 to a service implementation status), will not exceed six months, except in extenuating circumstances as supported by documentation in the case record of services.**

**Any deviation from this policy due to unusual or unforeseen circumstances will be \*documented in the case file and\* brought to the attention of the \*Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor\* [rehabilitation supervisor] for discussion and approval. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor\* [rehabilitation supervisor] will be responsible for close monitoring of these \*requirements\* [procedures].**

**[ii. Fiscal Management of Case Service Expenditures**

**All counselors are responsible for tracking and monitoring authorizations involving case service expenditures. The purpose of this policy is to maintain an up to date account of all unliquidated obligations on a quarterly basis.**

**Each counselor is provided with a copy of all authorizations he/she initiates. It will be the Counselor's responsibility to follow up on all outstanding authorizations and take whatever appropriate action is necessary to clear them up, such as canceling outstanding balances, etc.]**

**Section 2. - Authorization of and Payment for Services**

**[Policy]**

**Services and goods (including those necessary for the determination of eligibility and priority for services, vocational rehabilitation services which are part of the individual's IPE, post-employment services, and other goods and services required to achieve an employment outcome) must be purchased according to State purchasing procedures and requirements. All purchases must be authorized \*electronically or\* in writing prior to or at the time of purchase, unless unusual or unforeseen circumstances make this impractical. \*Justification of the need for the goods or services shall be documented in the client’s case record of services. Verbal authorization, promptly followed within ten (10) business days with electronic or written confirming authorization for goods and services may be done by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in emergency or urgent situations.\* The State Director shalI review such situations where \*verbal authorization or\* preauthorization of services was not possible or practical and make a final determination regarding approval in such instances. Payment for such purchases will be based upon fee schedules or contract awards established by the State of Connecticut. \*The Vocational Rehabilitation Program may use existing fee schedules established by other agencies. In addition, the Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services may establish individual rates with providers of services.\***

**[Procedures**

**Written authorization will be made, either simultaneously with or prior to the purchase of services, and a copy of the authorization will be retained. Where a VR employee is permitted to make an oral authorization in an emergency or urgent situation, prompt documentation of such oral authorization shall be made in the client's case record and such authorization shall be confirmed in writing and forwarded to the provider of the services.**

**All authorizations for case services are initiated by the Counselor to whom the case is assigned by means of Form BESB 2 and then approved by the rehabilitation supervisor or the State Director. It must be pointed out, however, that regardless of these authorization privileges, the final authority for commitment of funds rests with the State Comptroller. Counselors should, therefore, avoid as much as possible, any oral promises for authorization of services.]**

**[Processing of CO-17 Invoice Forms]**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Program will directly receive all \*invoices\* [CO-17 forms] to acknowledge the receipt of goods, services, and commodities on behalf of \*Vocational Rehabilitation Services\* [VR] clients. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] Counselor or authorized designee will review all reports that document the provision of goods and services. \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselors or authorized designees may be required to contact vendors to gather any additional information necessary to verify the provision of goods and services associated with a [CO-17] billing invoice before approving payment. Priority should be given to the processing of these requests in order to avoid any undue delay in payment to the vendor.**

**[In addition to the above policies and procedures, Counselors should refer to other sections of this manual for purchasing requirements for specific services.]**

**Section 3. - Assignment of Cases**

**Upon receipt of all referrals to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, the \*Vocational\* Rehabilitation Supervisor or other designee, as identified by the State Director, will assign each case to a designated \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] Counselor.**

**Section 4. – Referral [, Intake, and Assessment] \*and Application for Service\***

**a) Referral (Status 00)**

**[Policy]**

**When any person, agency, or organization notifies \*the Vocational Rehabilitation Program\* [VR], either in writing or orally, of any individual who may be \*interested in applying for\* [eligible] for vocational rehabilitation services provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program, that individual is considered as having been referred for vocational rehabilitation services. The purpose of referral is to provide individuals with disabilities entry into the rehabilitation system. Each referred individual must be given the opportunity to apply and to learn about the scope of services and eligibility criteria.**

**[Procedures**

**Intake**

**Normally the intake function is performed by BESB social workers. However, the Counselor may also provide this service. After the Bureau intake form is completed and the client’s information is recorded in the Bureau’s case management system, a copy of the individual’s client detail sheet will be sent to a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor who is assigned the task of informing the individual about the Vocational Rehabilitation program and to determine if the individual desires to apply for Vocational Rehabilitation services.]**

**Once \*a referral for Vocational Rehabilitation Services has been received,\* [an individual expresses an interest in applying for Vocational Rehabilitation services, their name will be forwarded to] the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor \*or designee\* [who] will assign the case to a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor will personally contact the prospective client \*to explain the vocational rehabilitation process and to invite the client to apply for services if desired. If the client desires to apply for services, a meeting date will be established to complete the application process within sixty (60) days of the date of the referral, unless the client requests or agrees to an extension\*[and have him/her sign a Vocational Rehabilitation application for Services which will signify the client's official application for vocational rehabilitation services].**

**[If referrals are from other than within the Bureau, acknowledgement should be made by telephone, letter, or personal contact at the Counselor's earliest convenience.**

**The Counselor should contact the client as soon as possible after receipt of the referral. Only in extraordinary cases should there be a time lag of over two weeks.**

**During the initial interview with the client, the Counselor should explain the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and other Bureau and Agency services in general terms and provide the client with printed material pertaining to CAP and inform the client of his or her rights regarding the appeals procedures which the client may use if dissatisfied with the provision of services.]**

**\*Pre-Employment Transition Services may be provided to referred individuals without the need for an application or determination of eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services if the individual meets the definition of student with a disability.\***

**[In addition:**

**1. The Counselor or other staff member should obtain the following basic information, prior to preparing a case record and registering the individual in referral status.**

**a. Name and address**

**b. Date of birth**

**c. Sex**

**d. Date of referral**

**e. Referral source**

**f. Statement indicating the nature of the presenting disability.**

**g. Statement indicating that the person referred is present or will be present in the state. A Connecticut address will suffice.**

**2. Upon receipt of a referral, the Counselor must assure that the individual, the individual's parent, guardian, or other representative, as appropriate, is aware that:**

**a. The referral has been made.**

**b. The Counselor will meet with the individual at a mutually satisfactory location to initiate the application process.**

**3. The Counselor should note the following residency/citizenship issues:**

**a. No state residency requirements, durational or permanent, can be imposed which will exclude an otherwise eligible individual who is present and available for services.**

**b. Legal aliens may be eligible for services, but illegal aliens may not receive services due to their ineligibility for employment (see "Information" section below).**

**Information**

**The Counselor should try to obtain the Social Security number of the person being referred. The case remains in Status 00 until either; 1) the referred individual applies for vocational rehabilitation services and is placed in Status 02; or, 2) the individual does not apply for vocational rehabilitation services and the case is placed in Status 08.**

**Immigrant aliens may be served since they are admitted to this country as permanent residents. Non-immigrant aliens are generally not eligible for Bureau services. They are admitted to this country for a particular purpose (visitation, study, diplomatic service) and for a specific time period. If the rehabilitation program can be completed and the visa conditions permit employment, it is possible to serve the individual. The status, duration of stay, and condition of the visa may be verified with:**

**Immigration & Naturalization Service**

**425 Eye Street, N.W.**

**Washington, D.C. 20536**

**Phone: (202) 633-4330**

**Immigration & Naturalization**

**U.S. Department of Justice Service**

**450 Main Street**

**Hartford, CT 06605**

**Phone: (860) 240-3171]**

**b) Applicant (Status 02)**

**[Policy]**

**[1]. An individual is considered to have submitted an application when the individual or the individual's \*authorized\* representative \*or parent/guardian if the individual is under the age of 18\*, as appropriate[:]**

**[(a)] has completed and signed the Bureau’s application form or has otherwise requested services through a signed, dated letter\*.\* [;**

**(b) has provided information necessary to initiate an assessment to determine eligibility and priority for services; and**

 **(c) is available to complete the assessment process.**

**2. The Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program, once an individual has submitted an application for vocational rehabilitation services, shall make an eligibility determination within sixty (60) days, unless:**

**(a) Exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of the Bureau preclude a determination within sixty (60) days and the Bureau and the individual agree to a specific extension of time; or**

**(b) a trial work period or extended evaluation is necessary.**

**Procedures]**

**Application is the beginning of the client/counselor relationship. The key activity in this process is the [intake or the] initial interview. Both the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor and client discuss the rehabilitation process and \*general\* [share] information concerning the individual's background \*is gathered for entry into the electronic case management system, including information that is required for federal reporting purposes. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will explain the criteria for determining eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services, the process for exploring career options and provide a general overview of how services are to be provided and coordinated. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will address the applicant's questions and concerns, as well as any questions or concerns raised by the applicant’s authorized representative and the parent/ guardian if the applicant is under the age of 18. Additionally, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will explain the appeals options and the Client Assistance Program and provide information in the preferred mode of communication of the client. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will also inform the applicant that individuals who receive services from the Vocational Rehabilitation Program must intend to achieve an employment outcome.\* This step begins the preliminary assessment for the purpose of determining eligibility. [When an individual is in this status, sufficient information is secured to make a determination of eligibility or ineligibility for vocational rehabilitation services; or to make a decision to place the individual in a trial work period or extended evaluation to make such a determination.**

**An individual becomes an applicant upon providing the basic referral information (see Chapter 3, Section 4a, Referral) and meeting the requirements stated above. Documentation may be the individual's, or his or her representative's, signature on the application form or a letter requesting services. Other evidence of the signature including witnessed mark, audio tape, TDD record, or application document signed by the parent, guardian or other representative who has the applicant's permission to represent him also would be sufficient.**

**1. In the initial interview, the Counselor will accomplish the following tasks:**

**a. Explain the vocational rehabilitation process, including eligibility criteria and services.**

**b. Address the applicant's questions and concerns.**

**c. Obtain pertinent information and outline steps needed to determine eligibility for services.**

**d. Review the applicant's rights and responsibilities, including the availability of the Client Assistance Program.]**

**\*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselors must insure that [the above] information is presented in [an appropriate] \*the preferred\* mode of communication consistent with the informed choice of the client [which will be best understood by the client]. If the individual is under the age of eighteen, then all appropriate forms must be signed by the individual's parent or legal \*guardian\* [representative].**

**[2. If the individual is under the age of eighteen, then all appropriate forms must be signed by the individual's parent or legal representative.**

**3. The case remains in Applicant Status (02) until either: 1) the applicant is certified eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and the case is placed into Eligibility Status (10); 2) the applicant is determined to need a trial work period or extended evaluation to determine rehabilitation potential, and the case is placed in Status 06; or 3) the applicant is certified as ineligible or the case is closed for other reasons and the case is placed in Status 08. The Counselor, unless there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of the Bureau, will make an eligibility determination within sixty (60) days.**

**The Counselor will discuss with the Rehabilitation Supervisor all situations where an eligibility decision may not be reached within the sixty (60) day time frame. Where the Supervisor is unable to provide guidance that will enable the Counselor to reach a determination of eligibility, the client shall be notified in writing of the reason(s) that are causing a delay in reaching a decision related to eligibility. The client must be informed of any action required and the anticipated time frames needed to reach a decision on eligibility. The client must agree to an extension based on the unforeseen or exceptional circumstances in order for an eligibility decision to be delayed. In instances where a client is not in agreement, the State Director should be made aware of the dispute and offer to mediate an extension that is acceptable to the client.**

**Information**

**The initial interview sets the stage for the development of the client/counselor relationship. At this point, the Counselor works together with the applicant to assess eligibility and IPE development. The client/counselor relationship is the primary focal point of vocational rehabilitation service delivery.**

**The Counselor must actively seek the applicant's ideas and opinions and keep the applicant informed as to what to expect at all phases of the vocational rehabilitation process.**

**Counselors are encouraged to provide appropriate fact sheets to the applicant, which elaborate on the vocational rehabilitation process and possible services.**

**Please refer to other sections for casework procedures regarding these status.**

**c) Guidelines for Resident Aliens**

**Alien Status and Eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

**This section provides guidance to counselors related to determining whether aliens are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. It is intended to frame a general policy since each situation may be unique and cannot be addressed individually in a general policy statement. It is not intended to establish a policy requiring Counselors to seek evidence regarding the applicant's citizen/alien status on a routine basis. Where there is reason to question the alien status of an applicant, he/she should be requested to present proper credentials or clarify said status with the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The purpose of the clarification is to determine whether the individual will be able to properly complete an Individualized Plan for Employment, which includes an employment outcome for a minimum of 90 days after the completion of substantial services. If the applicant cannot complete a rehabilitation program because of his or her alien status, they will not be considered eligible for VR services. The results of any clarification of alien status are to be recorded in the contact record.**

**The following are brief descriptions of three common alien classifications and some guidance with respect to each:**

**d) Guidelines for Immigrant Aliens**

**Admitted for the purpose of permanent residence; required to register prior to arrival; must submit an address card to Immigration and Naturalization Service at least annually (during the month of January) reflecting a current address; and required to carry a registration card at all times. Failure to comply may jeopardize immigrant status and may subject the individual to deportation action.**

**Since the immigrant alien is admitted for permanent residency, the Counselor's primary concern might be the individual's duly executed registration. In instances where registration has not been maintained, the Counselor could request that the individual clarify his or her status to remove this potential barrier to the completion of VR services.**

**e) Guidelines for non-immigrant Aliens**

**Admitted for a particular purpose and time period; change in purpose or time period is subject to Immigration and Naturalization Service approval; and such individuals are expected to return to their home country upon completion of the purpose or time period.**

**Examples include: visitors for business or pleasure; crewmen of vessels or aircraft; students pursuing a course of study; representatives to international organizations and ambassadors; public ministers; and career diplomatic or consular officers.**

**For non-immigrant aliens, the Counselor shall request that the individual provide a clear understanding or evidence regarding his or her status to determine to the extent possible, if VR services can be completed, noting also whether work is permitted under conditions of the visa. This group presents more difficult problems to the Counselor when determining eligibility, and decisions are to be made on an individual case basis.**

**f) Guidelines for Illegal Aliens**

**Present without legal status and would not be able to furnish appropriate evidence such as registration information.**

**As in the previous two classifications, the Counselor should get from the individual, proper credentials or clarification of his or her status to reach a decision on the probability of his or her completing VR services. In the absence of any such assurances, and the consequential uncertainties, it would not be possible to find these individuals eligible. There is no statutory requirement to report illegal aliens to the Immigration and Naturalization Service.]**

**Section 5. - Assessment for Determining Eligibility and Priority for Services \*Status 02-10\***

**[Policy]**

**A determination of eligibility is required for applicants to access services needed to achieve \*an employment outcome\* [a vocational goal] under an Individualized Plan for Employment. The determination should be made within sixty (60) days \*of the date of application\*, unless \*it is determined that trial work experiences are necessary to reach a determination of eligibility, or\* unusual or unforeseen circumstances require a delay in reaching a determination \*, and the client agrees to a specific date beyond the 60 days by which time an eligibility determination will be reached\*.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program shall conduct an assessment to determine whether an individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and the individual's priority under an order of selection for services (if the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program is operating under an order of selection). The assessment must be conducted in the most integrated setting possible, consistent with the individual's needs and informed choice.**

**a) Eligibility Requirements**

**The determination of an applicant's eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services will be based only on the following requirements:**

**\*(1)\* [(i)] A determination \*by qualified personnel\* that the applicant has a physical or mental impairment, including a determination of legal blindness or a visual condition that is progressive and degenerative and likely to result in legal blindness, as determined by qualified personnel licensed or certified in accordance with state law or regulation. Individuals who are or were served by the Bureau’s Children’s Services Program on or after January 1, 2010 and who meet the statutory definition of visually impaired, with best corrected distance acuity of no better than 20/70 in the better eye as determined by qualified personnel licensed or certified in accordance with state law or regulation may be determined to have a physical impairment. A person who is recipient of SSDI or SSI benefits shall be considered to be an individual with a significant disability.**

**\*(2)\* [(ii)] A determination \*by qualified personnel\* that the applicant's physical or mental impairment constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment for the applicant.**

**[(iii) A presumption that the applicant can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.]**

**\*(3)\* [(iv)] A determination \*by a qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor employed by the Bureau\* that the applicant requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain, \*advance in,\* or regain employment consistent with the applicant's \*unique\* strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, \*interest,\* and informed choice. \*For purposes of an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs, an individual is presumed to have a goal of an employment outcome.\***

**In the determination of eligibility, the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program shall assure that:**

**\*(A)\* [(1)] no duration of residence requirement is imposed that excludes from services any applicant who is present in the state;**

**\*(B)\* [(2)] no applicant or group of applicants is excluded or found ineligible solely on the basis of the type of disability;**

**\*(C)\* [(3)] the eligibility requirements are applied without regard to the \*race, color, religious creed, age, sex, marital status, national origin, ancestry, intellectual disability, physical disability, past or present history of mental disability, learning disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, civil union status, genetic information, or prior conviction of a crime\* [age, gender, race, color, creed, or national origin] of the applicant;**

**\*(D) the eligibility requirements are applied without regard to the type of expected employment outcome;**

**(E) the eligibility requirements are applied without regard for source of referral for vocational rehabilitation services;**

**(F)\* [(4)] the eligibility requirements are applied without regard to the particular service needs or anticipated cost of services required by an applicant or the income level of an applicant or applicant's family; [and]**

**\*(G) the eligibility requirements are applied without regard to the applicants’ employment history or current employment status; and;**

**(H) the eligibility requirements are applied without regard to the applicants’ educational status or current educational credential.\***

**[(5) no additional tests or procedures will be used to assess intent of applicants who are SSDI beneficiaries and SSI recipients that would hinder timely access to vocational rehabilitation services.]**

**The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor will base the determination of each of the basic eligibility requirements on:**

**(1) a review and assessment of existing data, including counselor observations, education records, information provided by the individual or the individual's family, [information used by the Social Security Administration] \*particularly information used by education officials,\* and determinations made by officials of other agencies; and**

**(2) to the extent existing data do not describe the current functioning of the individual or are unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to make an eligibility determination, an assessment of additional data resulting from the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including \*trial work experiences,\* assistive technology devices and services, \*personal assistance services,\* and [work site assessments,] \*any other support services\* that are necessary to determine whether an individual is eligible.**

**Where a client presents multiple employment situations at the time of application and desires services in order to maintain employment, the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor will base the eligibility determination on the primary employment of the individual. Primary employment is considered to be full time (at least 35 hours per week). If neither employment situation meets this standard, the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor and client will mutually identify which of the part-time positions is considered to be the primary source of support, and base the eligibility determination on that position.**

**b) Presumption of Benefit**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program shall presume that an applicant who meets the first two (2) eligibility requirements in paragraph \*a) (1) and (2) of this Section\* [(a)] can benefit in terms of an employment outcome [unless it demonstrates, based on clear and convincing evidence that the applicant is incapable of benefiting in terms of an employment outcome from vocational rehabilitation services].**

**c) Presumption of Eligibility for Social Security Beneficiaries**

**If an applicant with legal blindness has appropriate evidence, such as an award letter, that establishes the applicant's eligibility for Social Security benefits under Title II or Title XVI of the Social Security Act, it will be presumed that the applicant:**

**\*(1) is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services under paragraph a) (1) and (2) of this section; and**

**(2)\* [(i)] is considered to be an individual with a significant disability [which substantially limits one or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self care, self direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome; and**

**(ii) is presumed to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services under this title (provided that the individual intends to achieve an employment outcome consistent with the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual) unless it can be determined by clear and convincing evidence that such an individual is incapable of benefiting in terms of an employment outcome from vocational rehabilitation services due to the significance of the disability of the individual].**

**\*If an applicant for vocational rehabilitation services asserts that he or she is eligible for Social Security benefits under title II or title XVI of the Social Security Act (and, therefore, is presumed eligible for vocational rehabilitation services), but is unable to provide appropriate evidence, such as an award letter, to support that assertion, the Bureau must verify the applicant's eligibility under title II or title XVI of the Social Security Act by contacting the Social Security Administration. This verification must be made within a reasonable period of time that enables the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to determine the applicant's eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services within 60 days of the individual submitting an application for services.**

**d) Achievement of an employment outcome.**

**Any eligible individual, including an individual whose eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services is based on the individual being eligible for Social Security benefits under title II or title XVI of the Social Security Act, must intend to achieve an employment outcome that is consistent with the applicant's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.**

**(1) The Bureau is responsible for informing individuals, through its application process for vocational rehabilitation services, that individuals who receive services under the program must intend to achieve an employment outcome.**

**(2) The applicant's completion of the application process for vocational rehabilitation services is sufficient evidence of the individual's intent to achieve an employment outcome, and no additional demonstration on the part of the applicant is required.**

**Nothing in this section is to be construed to create an entitlement to any vocational rehabilitation service.**

**e) Review and Assessment of data for Eligibility Determination**

**Except as provided in Section 6 (Trial Work Experiences), the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must base the determination of each of the basic eligibility requirements in paragraph a) of this Section on**

**(1) A review and assessment of existing data, including counselor observations, education records, information provided by the individual or the individual's family, particularly information used by education officials, and determinations made by officials of other agencies; and**

**(2) To the extent existing data do not describe the**

**current functioning of the individual or are unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to make an eligibility determination, an assessment of additional data resulting from the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including trial work experiences, assistive technology devices and services, personal assistance services, and any other support services that are necessary to determine whether an individual is eligible; and**

**(3) Must presume that an applicant who has been**

**determined eligible for Social Security benefits under**

**title II or title XVI of the Social Security Act satisfies**

**each of the basic eligibility requirements in paragraph a) of this Section on determinations made by the Social Security Administration.\***

**[d) Evaluation of Rehabilitation Potential**

**i.) Preliminary Assessment to Determine Eligibility**

**The preliminary assessment is the process of gathering and analyzing the evaluation data necessary to determine eligibility. It should be completed as efficiently and expeditiously as is possible, yet carefully enough to ensure a sound basis for this decision. Counselors should make every effort to use existing and available information to avoid requiring clients to participate in evaluations which are unnecessary. During the preliminary assessment, the use of rehabilitation technology services may be considered as a means of determining eligibility.**

**All applicants for vocational rehabilitation services are entitled to a preliminary assessment to determine eligibility. The preliminary assessment shall include only such examinations and diagnostic studies necessary to determine:**

**1. Whether the individual has a physical or mental disability which for such individual constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment, and**

**2. Whether vocational rehabilitation services are needed for the individual to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment and the individual can benefit in terms of an employment outcome (consistent with his or her strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and informed choice) from the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, or whether extended evaluation of the individual's rehabilitation potential is necessary to make such a determination.**

**The initial interview with a client is an integral part of the preliminary diagnostic study. The client, and his or her family or authorized representative, are major sources of information. The Counselor should allow adequate time for the interview in order to obtain pertinent information regarding the client's disability, functional limitations, and whether or not medical or other diagnostic examinations have been completed which would assist in the eligibility determination process. The counselor shall also address during the eligibility process and during the development of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) any secondary disabilities that may impact the determination of a vocational goal or the services to be provided under the IPE. Whenever available records are believed to be sufficiently recent and complete, they should be obtained prior to purchasing any diagnostic examinations.**

**The Counselor should proceed with the preliminary assessment in a timely manner. Reasons for delays in this process should be documented in the case record and discussed with the applicant.**

**Records of previous studies might provide additional information which could have relevance to the rehabilitation process. Therefore, these records should be obtained. Records not required for the preliminary assessment should not delay the eligibility decision.**

**Clients shall only be referred for diagnostic evaluations to determine eligibility in rare instances where insufficient existing data is present to otherwise determine eligibility. In these instances, it is important that the Counselor obtains a signed and dated release of information from the client and provides the examiner with the specific questions which need to be answered. In some cases, Counselors may be required to paraphrase previous reports obtained from other practitioners.**

**While the preliminary assessment includes only that information necessary to determine eligibility, it is recognized that vocational counseling and planning begins with the initial interview. Other data required to determine a vocational goal or to plan specific services once eligibility has been determined are considered a part of the comprehensive assessment (when needed), but may be secured simultaneously with the preliminary assessment. This practice avoids duplication of effort and is more timely.**

**Functional Assessment for Priority of Services]**

**\*f) Data for Determination of Priority for Services Under an Order of Selection\***

**[During the application and] \*Upon reaching a determination that the individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services\* [eligibility process] the Vocational \*Rehabilitation\* Counselor will complete a Functional Assessment for Priority \*for\* [of] Services \*Client Form, utilizing to the greatest extent possible, data collected for purposes of making a determination of eligibility, including information obtained through trial work experiences, if applicable\* [to be used if the Vocational Rehabilitation Program cannot provide services to all eligible individuals due to budgetary constraints]. If the \*Vocational Rehabilitation Program\* [program operates] \*is operating\* under an order of selection, the \*Functional Assessment for Priority for Services Client Form will facilitate a determination of the client’s priority for services category.\* [functional assessment tool will be used to determine the order for priority of services, with those individuals who have the most significant disabilities based upon the Priority of Service checklist being served first. This instrument will be filed in an individual’s case folder for use only under an Order of Selection. Individuals who have an Individualized Plan for Employment that has been implemented, shall not be impacted by a decision of the agency to enter into an Order of Selection and shall continue to receive services as outlined in the Individualized Plan for Employment or subsequent amendments.**

**Authorizations for Diagnostic Evaluation**

**All diagnostic services involving cost(s) will be provided without regard to comparable benefits. All services are to be**

**provided by using the appropriate procedure for payment such as the state fee schedule, or contract award, and should be provided in the most integrated setting possible.**

**ii. Required Specialists' Evaluations**

**Specialist examinations are obtained when further information is needed to document or clarify the applicant or client's present abilities, potential, disability, and/or functional limitations. It may be used to determine eligibility or to assist with sound rehabilitation planning. Every effort should be made to avoid requiring the client to be evaluated unnecessarily.**

**A specialist examination is an evaluation by a practitioner skilled in a specific functional area. They include, but are not limited to, medical, psychiatric, psychological, audiological, rehabilitation technology, dental, speech, and language examinations.**

**Procedures**

**In the absence of relevant, existing data, a medical specialist's examination in the area of the major disabling condition will be secured in all cases. An Authorization for Services and pertinent background material should be mailed to the doctor. In most cases, the appointment for this type of examination will be made by the Counselor, and the client notified.**

**In certain instances where the recommendation for treatment involves a major decision on the part of the client, such as recommendation for removal of an eye or organ, the Bureau should secure, if possible, examinations from two specialists in the same field in order to afford the client every opportunity to make an informed choice regarding the recommendation.**

**Economical and effective use of medical resources requires a high degree of planning and preparation for medical diagnostic services. The client, his or her family, or his or her representative will need a clear understanding of the purposes for the additional diagnostic tests and, perhaps, help in cooperating fully in the diagnostic and treatment plan. Often the client and others may be of material help in assembling the medical history that will be a factor in preparing for further diagnostic services. In referring clients for diagnostic evaluations, it is important that the Counselor provides the examiner with the specific questions which need to be answered.**

**The medical findings should be reported in sufficient detail to substantiate the diagnosis. The diagnosis should indicate cause, nature, extent, and functional implications of the disability. Recommendations should be made for further diagnostic work or for medical treatment. The prognosis for employment should be specified. The effects of the impairment should be described in terms of limitations in functioning for certain types of employment activities, and restrictions for specific types of working conditions.**

**Specialist examinations are required as follows:**

**1. In the area of major disability.**

**2. In all cases of visual impairment when the Counselor will obtain an evaluation of visual loss from a physician skilled in the diseases of the eye or by an optometrist, whichever the individual may select.**

**3. Psychiatric or psychological examination in all cases of mental illness, where the disability represents a substantial impediment to employment.**

**4. Psychological evaluation in all cases of mental retardation, where the disability represents a substantial impediment to employment.**

**Information**

**In many instances when the client's disability is permanent and stable, the current health status assessment will be sufficient for eligibility and/or plan development. The specialist examination is used to further identify and/or clarify any significant conditions that might affect an individual's functional capacities or employment potential. They may also be used to state a prognosis and make rehabilitation recommendations. It is important to convey the purpose of the specialist's examination to the client.**

**When it is clear that both a general medical and medical specialist's examination are needed, they may be performed simultaneously by the same specialist.]**

**Section 6. - Trial Work [Periods] \*Experiences\* [and Extended Evaluations] for Individuals with Significant Disabilities (designated by Status 06)**

**\*Prior to any determination that an individual with a disability is unable to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome because of the severity of that individual's disability or that the individual is ineligible for vocational rehabilitation services, the Bureau must conduct an exploration of the individual's abilities, capabilities, and capacity to perform in realistic work situations.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must develop a written plan to assess periodically, at intervals of ninety (90) days or less, the individual's abilities, capabilities, and capacity to perform in competitive integrated work situations through the use of trial work experiences, which must be provided in competitive integrated employment settings to the maximum extent possible, consistent with the informed choice and rehabilitation needs of the individual. The results of such periodic assessments will be documented in the client’s record of services.**

**Trial work experiences include supported employment, on-the-job training, and other experiences using realistic integrated work settings. Trial work experiences must be of sufficient variety and over a sufficient period of time for the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to determine that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the individual can benefit from the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome, or that there is unequivocal, clear and convincing evidence that due to the severity of the individual’s disability, the individual is incapable of benefitting from the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome.**

**Appropriate supports must be provided, including, but not limited to assistive technology devices and services and personal assistance services, to accommodate the rehabilitation needs of the individual during the trial work experiences.\***

**[Trial Work Periods and Extended Evaluations are used in those instances where the applicant is determined to have a disability which results in a substantial impediment to employment, but where it cannot be determined whether the applicant can benefit in terms of an employment outcome due to the significance of the disability. Trial work experiences are used to explore the abilities, capabilities, and capacity of the individual to perform in realistic work situations. Through the use of situational assessments, supported employment assessments and/or on the job training assessments in competitive work settings, the individual is given the opportunity to demonstrate the capability of benefiting from vocational rehabilitation services. Extended evaluations shall be made available in situations where an individual is not able to participate in trial work experiences in competitive employment settings, or where trial work options have been exhausted before a determination of eligibility can be made. Extended evaluations shall occur in the most integrated setting available. Both Extended Evaluations and Trial work experiences may be provided for a period of up to 18 months in total and/or in combination. The full scope of assessment and diagnostic vocational rehabilitation services may be considered in conjunction with the provision of trial work experiences and or extended evaluations. Individuals may participate in multiple trial work experiences if necessary for purposes of determining eligibility. Use of trial work periods and/or extended evaluations should be seriously considered before any determination of ineligibility due to the significance of the disability is made. To the greatest extent possible, trial work experiences should occur in competitive, integrated settings. Clients participating in trial work experiences or extended evaluations will be placed in Status 06 for purposes of tracking.**

**Policy**

**(1) Prior to any determination that an individual with a significant disability is incapable of benefiting from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome because of the significance of that individual's disability, the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program shall conduct a trial work evaluation [or extended evaluation] to determine whether or not there is clear and convincing evidence to support such a determination.**

**(2) During the trial work or extended evaluation] period, which may not exceed 18 months in total and/or in combination, vocational rehabilitation services must be provided in the most integrated setting possible, consistent with the informed choice of the individual.**

**(3) During the trial work and/or extended evaluation period, the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program shall develop a written plan for determining eligibility and to identify the nature and scope of services required to participate in the trial work experience(s) and/or extended evaluation. The Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program may provide during this period only those services that are necessary to make a determination of eligibility.**

**(4) The Vocational Rehabilitation Program shall assess the individual's progress as frequently as necessary, but at least once every 90 days, during the trial work or extended evaluation period.**

**(5) The Vocational Rehabilitation Program shall use existing fee schedules and contract awards for situational assessments and, supported employment evaluations, and other necessary evaluations used during the trial work or extended evaluation period. On-the-job training contracts with employers may also be developed for purposes of providing assessments in competitive, integrated work settings.**

**(6) The Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program shall terminate trial work evaluation services at any point during the 18-month period if it determines that:**

**(a) there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the individual can benefit from the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome; or**

**(b) there is clear and convincing evidence that the individual is incapable of benefiting from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome; or**

**(c) the individual has exhausted options under the trial work experience. In these situations, a written plan will be developed for the individual to participate in an extended evaluation in the most integrated setting possible for that portion of the remaining 18 month period that is necessary to reach a determination of eligibility or ineligibility for vocational rehabilitation services.**

**Procedures**

**1. The furnishing of rehabilitation services under trial work experiences shall be based upon:**

**a. The presence of a physical or mental impairment which, for the individual, results in a substantial impediment to employment, and**

**b. An inability to make a determination that vocational rehabilitation services might benefit the individual in terms of employability unless there is a trial work evaluation to determine rehabilitation potential.**

**2. When determining the need for a trial work experience, the Counselor must notify the client in writing that an eligibility determination cannot be reached within the 60 day time frame, and note the reason for entering into a trial work experience in order to make an eligibility determination.**

**3. Vocational rehabilitation services that are directly related to participation in the trial work experience may be provided to an applicant for a period of up to 18 months.**

**4. The Counselor should place the case in Status 06 during the trial work period.**

**5. A written plan must be developed for services to be provided to determine eligibility.**

**6. The Counselor must document the individual's progress in the case record at least once every 90 days.**

**7. If the individual can be determined to be eligible at any time during the trial work period, a certificate of eligibility must be completed and the case moved into status 10, thus terminating the trial work period.**

**8. The trial work period must be terminated and the individual notified of ineligibility for vocational rehabilitation services if it can be determined, on the basis of clear and convincing evidence, that the individual cannot be expected to benefit in terms of an employment outcome from the continued provision of vocational rehabilitation services. The individual must be notified in writing of the Bureau's intention to close the case, and of the rights and remedies available to appeal the decision.**

**9. The trial work period must be terminated and an extended evaluation period initiated when all options for trial work experience have been exhausted or the individual is not able to participate in trial work experiences in order to make a decision of eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services. The individual, their guardian or authorized representative will be informed in writing of the decision to enter into an extended evaluation period. A written plan for the provision of evaluation services in the most integrated setting possible shall be developed with the applicant and signed by the Counselor and applicant.**

**10. The extended evaluation period must be terminated and the individual notified of ineligibility for vocational rehabilitation services if it can be determined, on the basis of clear and convincing evidence, that the individual cannot be expected to benefit in terms of an employment outcome from the continued provision of vocational rehabilitation services. The individual must be notified in writing of the Bureau's intention to close the case, and of the rights and remedies available to appeal the decision.**

**Information**

**No time allowance can be made for interruptions during the trial work period or extended evaluation period regardless of the nature of, or reason for, the interruption. Only one period of trial work evaluation of 18 months or less will be permitted during the period that the case is open. If it is determined that an individual is unable to participate in a trial work experience, the individual must be given the option of participating in an extended evaluation. The time period for participation in the extended evaluation shall be added to the time previously spent in trial work experiences. The total for these two options in combination or alone shall not exceed 18 months. If a case has been closed and the individuals needs have changed, the case may be re-opened and a subsequent evaluation of rehabilitation potential through trial work experience and/or extended evaluation may be conducted.]**

**Section 7. - Case Closure without an Eligibility Determination (Status 08)**

**[Policy]**

**\*a) Client Unavailable or Declines Participation\***

**The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program [shall] \*may\* not close an applicant's case prior to making an eligibility determination unless the applicant declines to participate in or is unavailable to complete an assessment for determining eligibility and priority for services, and the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services Program] \*Counselor\* has made a reasonable number of attempts to contact the applicant or, if appropriate, the applicant's representative to encourage the applicant's participation. \*At least one attempt should be in the preferred written mode of communication of the client, providing the client with ten (10) business days’ notice that case inactivation will occur if there is no response requesting services within that time frame. Information on the appeals options and the Client Assistance Program will be included with the written notification.**

**A case closed in Status 08 from referral or applicant status (00-02) for the following reasons does not constitute a decision of ineligibility. A certificate of ineligibility is neither appropriate nor required if the individual has:**

**(1) Died;**

**(2) Moved out of State, or has been unreachable after reasonable efforts to do so;**

**(3) been institutionalized under circumstances rendering the individual unavailable for an indefinite or considerable period of time and continuance of an active case would not benefit the individual;**

**(4) Declined to accept or use vocational rehabilitation services after reasonable effort has been expended to encourage participation; or**

**(5) Other comparable reasons as documented in the case record of services.**

**b) Ineligible for Services**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor can only make a determination that an applicant is ineligible for vocational rehabilitation services after reviewing the basis for the determination with the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, and after providing an opportunity for full consultation with the individual or, as appropriate, with the individual's representative. The individual must be informed in writing, with ten (10) business days’ notice, supplemented as necessary by other appropriate modes of communication consistent with the informed choice of the individual, of the ineligibility determination, including the reasons for that determination, and the means by which the individual may express and seek remedy for any dissatisfaction, including the procedures to request a review or appeal of the decision. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must provide the individual with information on services available from the Client Assistance Program and how to contact that program.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will offer to refer the individual to other programs that are part of the one-stop service delivery system under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that can address the individual's training or employment related needs; or to Federal, State, or local programs or service providers, including, as appropriate, independent living programs and extended employment providers, best suited to meet their rehabilitation needs, if the ineligibility determination is based on a finding that the individual has chosen not to pursue, or is incapable of achieving, an employment outcome.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor shall review, within 12 months and annually thereafter if requested by the individual or, if appropriate, by the individual's representative any ineligibility determination that is based on a finding that the individual is incapable of achieving an employment outcome. This review need not be conducted in situations in which the individual has refused it, the individual is no longer present in the State, the individual's whereabouts are unknown, or the individual's medical condition is rapidly progressive or terminal.\***

**[Procedures**

**When the Counselor determines that an applicant is ineligible for vocational rehabilitation services, he or she shall:**

**(a) make the determination only after providing an opportunity for full consultation with the individual or, as appropriate, with the individual's representative;**

**(b) inform the individual in writing, supplemented as necessary by other appropriate modes of communication consistent with the informed choice of the individual, of the ineligibility determination, including the reasons for that determination, the requirements under this section, and the means by which the individual may express and seek remedy for any dissatisfaction, including the procedures for review of a determination by the Rehabilitation Counselor;**

**(c) provide the individual with a description of services available from the Client Assistance Program and information on how to contact that program; and**

**(d) review within twelve (12) months and annually thereafter if requested by the individual or, if appropriate, by the individual's representative, any ineligibility determination that is based on a finding that the individual is incapable of achieving an employment outcome. This review need not be conducted in situations in which the individual has refused it, the individual is no longer present in the state, the individual's whereabouts are unknown, or the individual's medical condition is rapidly progressive or terminal.**

**In all instances where a Counselor believes that a client does not meet the eligibility criteria, this decision shall be reviewed with the Rehabilitation Supervisor prior to the finalization of an ineligibility decision.**

**Criteria for Closing Case Records from Referral and Applicant Status:**

**The major reasons for closing cases from referral and applicant status are: (a) one or both of the conditions for eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services are not met, or (b) intervening reasons prevent eligibility/ineligibility determinations.**

**a) Ineligibility**

**Determinations of ineligibility may be based upon such factors as lack of disabling conditions, lack of vocational impediment, disability too significant, or unfavorable medical prognosis. Determinations of ineligibility may not be based upon sex, race, creed, color, national origin, age, residence, or the type of disability. Supervisory review is required prior to a determination of ineligibility to ensure that every opportunity has been extended for participation.**

**b) Intervening Reasons**

**A case should be closed when an individual becomes unavailable for an extended period of time for interview, evaluation, necessary diagnostic studies, or other services essential for making eligibility determinations. A case closed in Status 08 from referral or applicant status (00-02) for the following reasons does not constitute a decision of ineligibility. A certificate of ineligibility is neither appropriate nor required if the individual has:**

**1) Died;**

**2) Moved out of State, or has been impossible to contact after reasonable efforts to do so;**

**3) been institutionalized under circumstances rendering the individual unavailable and precluding evaluation, diagnosis, or other essential services for an indefinite or considerable period of time and continuance of an active case would not benefit the individual;**

**4) Declined to accept or use vocational rehabilitation services after reasonable effort has been expended to encourage participation; or**

**5) Other comparable reasons.**

**A copy of the Case Service Report, RSA 911 must be completed for all cases closed in Status 08 from Status 02 (applicant status). In all instances of case closure in Status 08, the Counselor shall complete a closure narrative which indicates the reason(s) for case closure. All clients shall be provided with a written notification of intent to close their case within the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program. This written notification shall include the reason for the closure decision, and afford the client a thirty day period to contact the Counselor to dispute or discuss the case closure decision. All clients shall receive information related to the Client Assistance Program and the appeals procedures along with the closure letter.**

**Criteria for Closing Case Records from Trial Work Periods or extended evaluations for Individuals with Significant Disabilities**

**Criteria for closing case records from Trial Work or extended evaluation Periods to determine rehabilitation potential are:**

**a) Found Ineligible**

**The individual is found ineligible for any additional vocational rehabilitation services since it has been determined, with clear and convincing evidence present to document such a decision, that the individual cannot be expected to benefit in terms of an employment outcome from the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.**

**b) Expiration of the 18-Month Trial Work and/or extended evaluation Period**

**In some instances, an individual may be in a trial work and/or extended evaluation period for the full 18-month limit. At the end of such period, a determination must be made that the individual is, or is not, eligible. If ineligible, the case must be closed.**

**c) Interruptions**

**During a period of trial work experience or extended evaluation, an interruption of services may occur for a variety of reasons. When such an interruption precludes the continuation of the evaluation(s), the case should be closed, with a reason of unavailability to participate in services.**

**Certificate of Ineligibility]**

**In cases where the eligibility criteria are not met, the case recording should document with clear and convincing evidence such a decision. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor should complete the Certificate of Ineligibility and include a summary of the reasons for the decision of ineligibility. The case should then be closed in Status 08.**

**Section 8. - Eligibility (Status 10)**

**[Policy]**

**Eligibility, when used in relation to an individual's qualification for vocational rehabilitation services refers to a certification that:**

**(A) The applicant has a physical or mental impairment, including a determination of legal blindness, a visual condition that is progressive and degenerative and likely to result in legal blindness, or is or was served by the Bureau’s Children’s Services Program on or after January 1, 2010 and meets the statutory definition of visually impaired as determined by qualified personnel licensed or certified in accordance with state law or regulation.**

**(B) The applicant's physical or mental impairment constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment for the applicant.**

**(C) The applicant can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.**

**[Procedures**

**A determination of eligibility is required for applicants to access services needed to achieve a vocational goal] under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The determination should be made within sixty (60) days to allow for the prompt development of a rehabilitation plan.**

**A) An individual is eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services if:**

**1. The individual has a physical or mental impairment (disability), that must include legal blindness, a visual condition that is progressive and degenerative and likely to result in legal blindness, or is visually impaired and is or was served by the Bureau’s Children’s Services Program on or after January 1, 2010, which for the individual constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment; and**

**2. The individual can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.**

**B) It shall be presumed that an individual can benefit in terms of an employment outcome unless the VR Counselor can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the individual is incapable of benefiting from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome.**

**An employment outcome means with respect to an individual entering or retaining full time, or if appropriate, part-time competitive employment [in an integrated setting] (including satisfying the requirements for supported employment outcomes) or satisfying any other vocational outcome requirements consistent with the Rehabilitation Act.**

**A trial work experience must be provided in Status 06 in order to obtain clear and convincing evidence that the individual is incapable of benefiting from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome.**

**C) The Counselor must determine whether an individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services within 60 days of the person's date of application. This time frame can be extended only if an individual is placed into a trial work experience [or extended evaluation], or if the Counselor has encountered exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond their control that prevent a decision regarding eligibility within the stated time period. In these instances, the Counselor must notify the individual in writing, supplemented as necessary by other appropriate modes of communication consistent with the informed choice of the individual, of these circumstances and the individual must agree that the extension of time is warranted. In the event that no agreement can be reached, the State Director shall rule on the determination. In these instances, if the client is not in agreement with the decision of the State Director, they shall be advised of their rights and remedies available, including the right to a hearing by an impartial hearing officer and the availability of services through the Client Assistance Program.**

**D) The determination of eligibility will be based upon a review and assessment of existing data, including Counselor observations, education records, information provided by the individual or the individual's family, information used by the Social Security Administration, and determinations made by officials of other agencies.**

**To the extent that existing data do not describe the current functioning of the individual or are unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate and additional data is needed to reach a determination of eligibility, the Counselor will make an assessment of additional data resulting from the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including assistive technology devices and services, and work site assessments, that are necessary to determine whether an individual is eligible. The Counselor also will obtain signed releases from the individual and request only those assessments and information that are necessary to satisfy the eligibility criteria. All information gathered shall be done in accordance with confidentiality requirements.**

**E) Where a client presents multiple employment situations at the time of application, and desires services in order to retain employment, the Counselor will base the eligibility determination on the primary employment of the individual. Primary employment is considered to be full time (at least 35 hours per week). If neither employment situation meets this standard, the Counselor and client will mutually identify which of the part-time positions is considered to be the primary source of support, and base the eligibility determination on that position.**

**F) The Counselor will document their preliminary assessment in the narrative section of the individual's case folder. A summation of this assessment, including statements as to how the individual does or does not meet eligibility criteria, will be submitted to the appropriate supervisory staff for review. The Counselor will complete, sign, and date the Certificate of Eligibility or Ineligibility. The individual shall be notified of the outcome of the assessment to determine eligibility.**

**G) If an individual is found ineligible for vocational rehabilitation services, the Counselor will notify the individual, or the individual's representative as appropriate, in an accessible written format of the reason(s) for this determination. In such situations, the individual will be informed of their rights and available remedies, including the right to a hearing before an impartial hearing officer. They will also be informed of the availability of services provided by the Client Assistance Program.**

**A decision of ineligibility will be made only in full consultation of the individual, or, as appropriate, the individual's representative. Any decision of ineligibility will be reviewed at least annually in consultation with the individual. The results of this review shall be documented in the individual's case folder and submitted for supervisory review. The Counselor shall initiate the first annual review. The individual will be instructed at that time that it will be their prerogative and responsibility to initiate all subsequent reviews of ineligibility decisions. No review shall be required if the individual refuses it, is unavailable, has a rapidly progressive and degenerative medical condition or has left the state.**

**In all situations where a Counselor believes that an applicant does not meet one or more of the eligibility criteria, the decision shall be reviewed with their Supervisor prior to reaching a final determination of ineligibility.**

**H) In the determination of eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services, the Counselor will adhere to the following requirements:**

**(1) No duration of residence requirement is imposed that excludes from services any applicant who is present in the state;**

**(2) No applicant or group of applicants is excluded or found ineligible solely on the basis of the type of disability;**

**(3) The eligibility requirements are applied without regard to the race, color, religious creed, age, sex, marital status, national origin, ancestry, intellectual disability, physical disability, past or present history of mental disability, learning disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, civil union status, genetic information, prior conviction of a crime or other factors of the applicant; and**

**(4) The eligibility requirements are applied without regard to the particular service needs or anticipated cost of services required by an applicant or the income level of an applicant or applicant's family.**

**(5) No additional tests or procedures will be used to assess intent of applicants who are SSDI beneficiaries and SSI recipients that would hinder timely access to vocational rehabilitation services.**

**I) Certificates of Eligibility and Ineligibility will be completed by the Counselor as follows:**

**Certificate of Eligibility]**

**If an individual meets the eligibility criteria, the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor will complete the Certificate of Eligibility, and the case will be changed to Status 10 (Acceptance/IPE Development) in the case record.**

**[Certificate of Ineligibility**

**In cases where the individual does not meet the eligibility criteria and the reasons for the decision clearly show this, the Counselor should complete the Certificate of Ineligibility, and include a summary of the reasons for the decision of ineligibility. The Counselor will notify the individual, or the individual's representative as appropriate, in an accessible written format of the reason(s) for this determination. The case should then be closed from referral to Status 08.**

**Information**

**The eligibility determination is likely to be the most important decision a Counselor will make in the rehabilitation process. It determines whether or not an applicant may receive services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The process calls upon the Counselor to make a considered professional judgment. During this process, counselors are encouraged to seek advice from their supervisors, program specialists, or from medical, psychological or psychiatric consultants, as needed. In the final analysis, however, eligibility is determined by the Counselor. A finding of eligibility does not mean entitlement to all services that the Bureau provides. Once eligibility is determined, the client and Counselor must determine the individual vocational goal and the particular services which are to be provided to achieve that goal.**

**The goal of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program is suitable employment which is consistent with the applicant's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and informed choice. In some cases, the goal may be to retain the applicant's current level of employment, if loss of vision or change in work situations has placed the employment in jeopardy.**

**In cases where eligibility cannot be determined, Counselors should use trial work experiences or extended evaluations. This allows for up to eighteen (18) months of services under a written plan, solely for the purpose of determining whether the individual would be employed as the result of VR services. When it is determined, based on clear and convincing evidence, that an individual's functional limitations are so significant that, given available resources, there is little or no expectation that VR services will result in a viable vocational outcome, ineligibility should be declared.**

**Once a decision is made that an applicant is eligible for services, the Counselor and client must proceed with IPE development. In many cases, adequate information may have been obtained prior to the eligibility determination in order to develop the IPE immediately without the need for further evaluations. However, where necessary for purposes of determining a vocational goal or the scope and extent of services, additional assessments may be performed, purchased and coordinated.]**

**Section 9. - Planning and Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) Development (Status 10 - 12)**

**\*The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is a written plan that identifies the employment outcome of the individual. The Individualized Plan for Employment will be developed and implemented in a timely manner for each individual determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services or, if the Bureau is operating under an order of selection, for each eligible individual to whom the Vocational Rehabilitation Program is able to provide services to. Services will be provided in accordance with the provisions of the Individualized Plan for Employment.\***

**[Definition – The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is a written plan that details the career goal of the eligible individual, and the services that will be provided and coordinated to achieve this goal.**

**Policy]**

**a) Assessment to Determine the Vocational Rehabilitation Needs for Eligible Individuals:**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program shall conduct an assessment to determine the vocational rehabilitation needs for each eligible individual or, if the Bureau is operating under an order of selection, for each eligible individual to whom the Bureau is able to provide services. The purpose of this assessment is to determine the [long-term vocational goal,] \*employment outcome,\* and the nature and scope of vocational rehabilitation services to be included in the IPE. The IPE must be designed to achieve [an] \*a specific\* employment outcome that is \*selected by the individual\* consistent with the individual's unique strengths, \*resources,\* priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, [career] interests, and informed choice.**

**b) Options for Developing an Individualized Plan for Employment:**

**The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind shall provide the eligible individual or the individual's representative, in writing and in an appropriate mode of communication, with information on the individual's options for developing an Individualized Plan for Employment, including**

**\*(1) the option for the individual, or as appropriate, the individual’s representative to develop all or part of the IPE**

**(A) without assistance from the Bureau or other entity or**

**(B) with assistance from**

**(i) a qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor employed by the Bureau;**

**(ii) a qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor who is not employed by the Bureau;**

**(iii) a disability advocacy organization; or**

**(iv) other resources\***

**[(1) information on the availability of assistance, to the extent determined to be appropriate by the eligible individual, from a qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in developing all or part of the individualized plan for employment for the individual, and the availability of technical assistance from external sources in developing all or part of the individualized plan for employment for the individual;]**

**(2) \*Additional information to assist the eligible individual, or as appropriate, the individual’s representative in developing the Individualized Plan for Employment including\* a description of the full range of components that shall be included in an Individualized Plan for Employment;**

**(3) as appropriate \*to each eligible individual:\***

**(A) an explanation of Bureau guidelines and criteria [associated with] \*for determining an eligible individual’s\* financial commitments [concerning] \*under\* an Individualized Plan for Employment;**

**(B) additional information the eligible individual requests \*or the Bureau determines to be necessary to the development of the IPE;\* and**

**\*(C)\* [(iii)] information on the availability of assistance in completing required forms for the development of an Individualized Plan for Employment; and**

**[(4)]**

**\*(D)\* [(i)] a description of the rights and remedies available to such an individual including, if appropriate, recourse to the processes set forth; and**

**\*(E)\* [(ii)] a description of the availability of a Client Assistance Program and information about how to contact the Client Assistance Program.**

**\*(4) for individuals entitled to benefits under title II or XVI of the Social Security Act on the basis of disability or blindness, general information on additional supports and assistance for individuals with disabilities desiring to enter the workforce, including assistance with benefits planning must be provided.\***

**\*c) Required Process\* [Once developed:**

**[1)] The IPE shall be agreed to, and signed by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative within the framework of a counseling and guidance relationship. The Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor shall review and sign the IPE prior to the client in all situations where a Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor has developed the IPE with the client or their authorized representative and in situations where higher education at the graduate school or higher level is included in the plan.]**

**\*The Individualized Plan for Employment is a written document prepared on forms provided by the Bureau. The IPE is developed and implemented in a manner that gives eligible individuals the opportunity to exercise informed choice in selecting;**

**(1) the employment outcome, including employment setting;**

**(2) The specific vocational rehabilitation services needed to achieve the employment outcome, including the setting in which services will be provided;**

**(3) The entity or entities that will provide the vocational rehabilitation services; and**

**(4) the methods available for procuring services.**

**The Individualized Plan for Employment is agreed to and signed by the eligible individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative; and is approved and signed by a qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor employed by the Bureau, and by the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor in all situations where a Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor has developed the IPE with the client or their authorized representative; and in situations where higher education at the graduate school or higher level is included in the IPE.**

 **A copy of the Individualized Plan for Employment and a copy of any amendments to the Individualized Plan for Employment are provided to the eligible individual or, as appropriate, to the individual's representative, in writing and, if appropriate, in the native language or mode of communication of the individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative. The Individualized Plan for Employment is reviewed at least annually by a qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the eligible individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative to assess the eligible individual's progress in achieving the identified employment outcome.**

**The Individualized Plan for Employment is amended, as necessary, by the individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative, in collaboration with a representative of the Bureau or a qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (to the extent determined to be appropriate by the individual), if there are substantive changes in the employment outcome, the vocational rehabilitation services to be provided, or the providers of the vocational rehabilitation services. Amendments to the Individualized Plan for Employment do not take effect until agreed to and signed by the eligible individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative, and by a qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor employed by the Bureau, or by the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor in all situations where a Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor has developed the IPE with the client or their authorized representative; and in situations where higher education at the graduate school or higher level is included in the IPE amendment.**

**The Individualized Plan for Employment is amended, as necessary, to include the post-employment services and service providers that are necessary for the individual to maintain, advance in or regain employment, consistent with the individual’s unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.**

**An Individualized Plan for Employment for a student with a disability is developed in consideration of the student's individualized education program or 504 services, as applicable; and, in accordance with the plans, policies, procedures, and terms of the interagency agreement between the Bureau and the State Department of Education.**

**d) Time line for developing the Individualized Plan**

**for Employment.**

**The Individualized Plan for Employment must be developed as soon as possible, but not later than 90 days after the date of determination of eligibility, unless the Bureau and the eligible individual agree to the extension of that deadline to a specific date by which the Individualized Plan for Employment must be completed.\***

**[(2) The IPE shall be developed as expeditiously as possible. Under normal circumstances, sufficient data should be available or gathered to enable the completion of IPE development within a period not to exceed six (6) months or whatever federal law or regulation otherwise requires. If circumstances preclude IPE development within this timeframe, case record documentation should clearly identify the specific reasons that preclude development of a plan.**

**(3) In the development of an IPE for a student with a disability who is receiving special education services, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program shall consider a student's individualized education program.**

**(4) The Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program shall**

**review the IPE with the individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative as often as necessary, but at least once each year to assess the individual's progress in meeting the employment goal identified in the IPE.**

**(5) The Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program**

**shall incorporate into the IPE any revisions that are necessary if there are substantive changes in the employment outcome, the vocational rehabilitation services to be provided, or the service providers of the services. The amended IPE shall be agreed to, and signed by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the eligible individual or, as appropriate, their authorized representative. The Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor shall review and sign the IPE amendment prior to the client in all situations where a Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor has developed the IPE amendment with the client or their authorized representative, and in situations where higher education at the graduate school or higher level is included in the amended plan. Amendments to an IPE that include the development of a new career goal or substantial changes in service delivery shall not take effect until agreed to and signed by the above stated individuals. Minor changes to the IPE, such as adding in additional services to support the implementation of a previously agreed to career goal, do not require a formal IPE amendment. In these situations, a verbal agreement with the client to add the additional service, followed up with a letter from the Counselor to the client summarizing the verbal agreement will be sufficient.**

**(6) The Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program shall promptly provide each individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative, a copy of the IPE and its amendments in the native language, or appropriate format of communication, of the individual or, as appropriate, of the individual's representative.]**

**\*e)\* [c)] Data for Preparing the IPE:**

**(1) Preparation without a Comprehensive Assessment:**

**To the extent possible, the \*employment outcome\* [vocational goal,] and \*nature and\* scope of rehabilitation services to be included in the individual's IPE shall be determined based on the data used for the assessment of eligibility and priority for services.**

**(2) Preparation Based on Comprehensive Assessment.**

**(A) If additional data are necessary to \*determine the employment outcome and the nature and scope of services to be included in the Individualized Plan for Employment of an eligible individual,\* [prepare the IPE,] the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program shall conduct a comprehensive assessment of the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and \*informed choice\* [needs], including the need for supported employment services of an eligible individual, in the most integrated setting possible, consistent with the informed choice of the individual.**

**\*(B) In preparing the comprehensive assessment, the Bureau must use, to the maximum extent possible and appropriate and in accordance with confidentiality requirements, existing information that is current as of the date of the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment, including information available from other programs and providers, particularly information used by education officials and the Social Security Administration. Information provided by the individual and the individual's family, as well as information obtained under the assessment for determining the individual's eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs shall also be utilized.\***

**[(b) The comprehensive assessment shall be limited to information that is necessary to identify the rehabilitation needs of the individual and develop the IPE and may, to the extent needed, include:**

**(i) an analysis of pertinent medical, psychiatric, psychological, neuropsychological, and other pertinent vocational, educational, cultural, social, recreational, and environmental factors, and related functional limitations, that affects the employment and rehabilitation needs of the individual;**

**(ii) an analysis of the individual's personality, career interests, interpersonal skills, intelligence and related functional capacities, educational achievements, work experience, vocational aptitudes, personal and social adjustments, and employment opportunities;**

**(iii) an appraisal of the individual's patterns of work behavior and services needed to acquire occupational skills and to develop work attitudes, work habits, work tolerance, and social and behavioral patterns suitable for successful job performance; and
(iv) an assessment, through provision of rehabilitation technology services, of the individual's capacities to perform in a work environment, including in an integrated setting, to the maximum extent feasible and consistent with the individual's informed choice.**

**(c) In the preparation of a comprehensive assessment, the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program shall use, to the maximum extent possible and appropriate and in accordance with confidentiality requirements, existing information, including information that is provided by the individual, the family of the individual, and education agencies.]**

**\*f)\* [d)] Content of the Individualized Plan for Employment**

**\*Regardless of the approach that the eligible individual selects for the purposes of developing the Individualized Plan for Employment, each\* [Each] IPE \*must\* [shall] include[, as appropriate, statements concerning]:**

**(1) a description of the specific employment outcome that is chosen by the eligible individual, consistent with the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, \*career\* interests, and informed choice [of the eligible individual, and, to the maximum extent appropriate, results in employment in an integrated setting] \*consistent with the general goal of competitive integrated employment (except that in the case of an eligible individual who is a student or youth with a disability, the description may be a description of the individual’s projected post-school employment outcome)\*;**

**(2) a description of the specific vocational rehabilitation services that are—**

**\*(A)\* [(a)] needed to achieve the employment outcome,**

**including as appropriate, the provision of assistive technology devices and assistive technology services, and personal assistance services, including training in the management of such services; and**

**\*(B) In the case of a plan for an eligible individual that is a student or youth with a disability, the specific transition services and supports needed to achieve the individual’s employment outcome or projected post-school employment outcome.**

**(C)\*[(b)] provided in the most integrated setting that is**

**appropriate for the service involved and is consistent with the informed choice of the individual;**

**\*(D)\* [(3)] the timelines for achievement of the employment outcome and for the initiation [and duration] of services;**

**\*(E)\* [(4)] a description of the entity \*or entities\* chosen by the eligible individual, or as appropriate, the individual's representative, that will provide the vocational rehabilitation services, and the methods used to procure such services;**

**\*(F)\* [(5)] a description of criteria \*that will be used\* to evaluate progress toward achievement of the employment outcome;**

**\*(G)\* [(6)] the terms and conditions of the Individualized Plan for Employment, including, as appropriate, information describing—**

**\*(i)\* [(a)] the responsibilities of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program;**

**[(b) the responsibilities of the eligible individual,**

**including—]**

**\*(ii)\* [(i)] the responsibilities the eligible individual will assume in relation to \*achieving\* the employment outcome of the individual;**

**\*(iii)\* [(ii)] the responsibility of the eligible individual with regard to applying for and securing comparable \*services and\* benefits; [and]**

**\*(iv)\* [(iii)] if applicable, the \*extent of the individual’s\* participation [of the eligible Individual] in paying for the costs of \*services\* [the plan]; and**

**\*(v) The responsibilities of other entities as the result of arrangements made pursuant to the comparable services or benefits requirements.\***

**\*g) Supported Employment Requirements**

**[(7)] \*An Individualized Plan for Employment\* for [a person] \*an individual\* with \*a\* [the] most significant \*disability\* [disabilities] for whom an employment outcome in a supported employment setting has been determined to be appropriate, \*must\* [information identifying] –**

**\*(1) specify the supported employment services to be provided by the Bureau\***

**\*(2)\* [(i)] \*specify\* the \*expected\* extended services needed by the eligible individual, \*which may include natural supports\*; and**

**\*(3)\*[(ii)] \*identify\* the source of extended services, or to the extent that the source of the extended services cannot be identified at the time of the development of the IPE, \*include\* a description of the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that such a source will become available, and:**

**\*(4)\* [(iii)] \*Provide for periodic monitoring to ensure that the individual is making satisfactory progress toward meeting the weekly work requirement established in the Individualized Plan for Employment by the time of transition to extended services;\* [the hours per week that the client expects to work;] and**

**\*(5) Provide for the coordination of services provided under an Individualized Plan for Employment with services provided under other individualized plans established under other Federal or State programs;**

**(6) To the extent that job skills training is provided, identify that the training will be provided on site; and**

**(7) Include placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of individuals with the most significant disabilities.**

**h) Post-employment services**

**The Individualized Plan for Employment for each individual must contain, as determined to be necessary, statements concerning:**

**(1) The expected need for post-employment services prior to closing the record of services of an individual who has achieved an employment outcome;**

**(2) A description of the terms and conditions for the provision of any post-employment services; and**

**(3) If appropriate, a statement of how post-employment services will be provided or arranged through other entities as the result of arrangements made pursuant to the comparable services or benefits requirements.\***

**[(8) as determined to be necessary, a statement of projected need for post-employment services.]**

**\*i) Coordination of services for students with disabilities.**

**The Individualized Plan for Employment for a student with a disability must be coordinated with the individualized education program or 504 services, as applicable, for that individual in terms of the goals, objectives, and services identified in the education program.\***

**[e) Ineligibility:**

**The decision that an individual is not capable of achieving an employment outcome and is no longer eligible to receive services under an IPE shall be made in accordance with VR requirements. The decision, and the reasons, on which the decision was based, shall be documented in the case record of services.**

**Procedures**

**(A) IPE Development**

**An Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is a plan which maps out the services needed by an individual to achieve an employment goal. It is the client's plan for the future and requires his or her input and full participation.**

**The Individualized Plan for Employment can be developed jointly by the client and Counselor or the client may request technical assistance through an external source to develop his or her own IPE. Technical assistance can be provided through Independent Living Center staff, or other entities and individuals familiar with the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act, as identified by the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program. The IPE must be agreed upon and signed by the eligible individual (or in an appropriate case, a parent, a family member, a guardian, an advocate, or an authorized representative of such individual), and the Counselor. The Individualized Plan for Employment shall be designed to achieve the employment objective of the individual consistent with the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and needs, including the need for supported employment services, in the most integrated setting possible, consistent with the informed choice of the individual.**

**Information**

**The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is a written plan for those clients found to be eligible. It describes the vocational goal; services to be provided; the provider of stated services and the responsibilities of the client and the VR Program needed to achieve the goal. The development of the IPE begins at the initial interview. At the time of intake, the Counselor and client begin the process of working together and thinking about what vocational goals may be considered and those services which may be needed. The IPE may be amended throughout the program, as needed. In essence, the Counselor and client should be considering the IPE throughout the life of the case.**

**The major key to success of an IPE lies in the degree to which the Counselor's expertise and client's involvement lead to development of a suitable vocational goal and plan for services. The development of an IPE may call upon the Counselor and client to negotiate and compromise, but it must ultimately be the client's plan for his or her future, rather than solely the Counselor's plan for that client.**

**In developing an employment goal with the client, the Counselor should always look to the client's abilities, strengths, and interests. The process should involve a synthesis of these positive attributes and how they can be best used in the workforce, rather than the exercise of ruling out possibilities due to the client's weaknesses or disability. Other factors which need to be considered include the client's values, expressed needs, functional limitations, career goals, family/social/cultural/financial situation, experience and training, as well as the Counselor's evaluation of services needed, job requirements, labor market trends, available resources, and agency policy. Even though a Counselor must assure that the vocational goal in an IPE is feasible; a client's aspirations should never be hastily ruled out. When a goal appears to be unfeasible, the Counselor and client should look for an alternative, which would encompass the interests and values reflected in the goal expressed by the client.**

**The services to be provided under an IPE are those that are necessary to achieve the employment outcome. This should include both services authorized by the Bureau and relevant services that are at no cost or in-kind. Counselors should, whenever possible, use comparable benefits for the provision of services.**

**An ongoing reevaluation of the plan should take place to determine whether it is still appropriate and whether amendments to the plan are needed. Review should be made as often as needed (but at least annually) when changes occur in circumstances, plans, or status of the case.**

**The IPE should be approached as a tool for the Counselor and client to come to a mutual understanding of goals, services, responsibilities, and the method(s) for evaluating progress. Therefore, the greater the clarity and specificity of the document, the more the IPE can be used as an aid to the rehabilitation process.**

**(B) Content of the IPE**

**The IPE will include statements regarding:**

**(1) The specific long-term employment goal based on the assessment for determining vocational rehabilitation needs, including the individual's career interests. This goal must be consistent with the informed choice of the individual, and to the extent possible in an integrated setting.**

**(2) The specific vocational rehabilitation services to be provided to achieve the established employment goal, including, if appropriate, rehabilitation technology services, and on-the-job and related personal assistance services.**

**(3) The projected dates for the initiation of vocational rehabilitation services, and the projected time frame for the achievement of the individual's employment goal.**

**(4) Objective criteria, an evaluation procedure, and a schedule for periodic review and evaluation of progress toward achieving the employment goal.**

**(5) The terms and conditions for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including:**

**(a) the responsibilities of the individual in implementing the IPE;**

**(b) if appropriate, the extent of the individual's participation in the cost of services;**

**(c) the extent to which goods and services shall be provided in the most integrated settings possible, consistent with the informed choices of the individual;**

**(d) the extent to which comparable services and benefits are available to the individual under any other program; and**

**(e) the identification of the entity or entities that shall provide the services and the process used to provide or procure the services, including:**

**i. a statement detailing how each service shall be provided or arranged through cooperative agreements with other service providers; and**

**ii. the terms and conditions under which the goods and planned services will be provided.**

**(6) Identification of other related services and benefits provided pursuant to federal, state or local programs, that will enhance the capacity of the individual to achieve the employment goal.**

**(7) How the IPE for a student with a disability who is receiving special education services shall be coordinated with the individualized education program (IEP) for that individual in terms of the goals, objectives, and services identified in the IEP.**

**(8) An assessment of the expected need for post-employment services and, if appropriate, extended services including:**

**(9) IPEs for individuals with the most significant disabilities for whom a vocational goal in a supported employment setting has been determined to be appropriate shall also contain:**

**[(a) a description of the supported employment services to be provided; and a description of the extended services needed and identification of the source of extended services or, in the event that identification of the source is not possible at the time the IPE is developed, a statement explaining the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that services shall become available;**

**(b) identification of the number of hours per week that the individual will be working, or desires to work at an employment site.**

**To the maximum extent possible, the IPE shall be provided in the native language or mode of communication of the individual, or in an appropriate case, of a parent, family member, guardian, advocate, or other authorized representative of the individual.]**

**\*j)\* [f)] Scope of \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Services \*for Individuals with Disabilities\*:**

**[In addition to the full range of assessment services previously outlined in Chapter 2 (Section 12) and Chapter 3 (Sections 4, 5, 6, and 9) of this manual, the following goods or services can be provided to assist an individual with a disability to become employable, and will be considered in the development of the IPE:]**

**\*(1) Pre-Employment Transition Services.**

**The Bureau, in collaboration with the local educational agencies involved, will provide, or arrange for the provision of, Pre-Employment Transition Services for all students with disabilities that include visual impairment or legal blindness who are in need of such services, from Federal funds reserved in accordance with governing federal regulations, and any funds made available from State, local, or private funding sources. Funds reserved and made available may be used for the required, authorized, and pre-employment transition coordination activities. Pre-Employment Transition Services are available Statewide to all students with disabilities that include visual impairment or legal blindness, regardless of whether the student has applied or been determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.**

**(A) A student with a disability is an individual with a disability that includes visual impairment or legal blindness who is participating in a secondary, post-secondary, or other recognized education program:**

**(i) who is not younger than the age of 16 for the provision of transition services under section 614(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;**

**(ii) or for whom the Planning and Placement Team has provided for transition services in the Individualized Education Program for students age 14 or 15; and**

**(iii) who is not older than 21 years of age; and**

**(iv) is eligible for, and receiving, special education or related services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ; or**

**(v) is a student who is an individual with a disability that includes visual impairment or legal blindness, for purposes of section 504.**

**(B) Required Activities**

**The Bureau provides the following required Pre-Employment Transition Services:**

**(i) Job exploration counseling;**

**(ii) Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment in the community to the maximum extent possible;**

**(iii) Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;**

**(iv) Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and**

**(v) Instruction in self-advocacy (including instruction in person-centered planning), which may include peer mentoring (including peer mentoring from individuals with disabilities working in competitive integrated employment).**

 **(C) Authorized activities**

**Funds available and remaining after the provision of the required pre-employment transition activities may be used to improve the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-secondary education or an employment outcome by:**

**(i) Implementing effective strategies to increase the likelihood of independent living and inclusion in communities and competitive integrated workplaces;**

**(ii) Developing and improving strategies for individuals with intellectual disabilities and individuals with significant disabilities to live independently; participate in post-secondary education experiences; and obtain, advance in and retain competitive integrated employment;**

**(iii) Providing instruction to vocational rehabilitation counselors, school transition personnel, and other persons supporting students with disabilities;**

**(iv) Disseminating information about innovative, effective, and efficient approaches to achieve the pre-employment transition goals;**

**(v) Coordinating activities with transition services provided by local educational agencies under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;**

**(vi) Applying evidence-based findings to improve policy, procedure, practice, and the preparation of personnel, in order to better achieve the pre-employment transition goals;**

**(vii) Developing model transition demonstration projects;**

**(viii) Establishing or supporting multistate or regional partnerships involving States, local educational agencies, designated State units, developmental disability agencies, private businesses, or other participants to achieve the goals of this section; and**

**(ix) Disseminating information and strategies to improve the transition to post-secondary activities of individuals who are members of traditionally unserved and underserved populations.**

**(D) Pre-employment transition coordination.**

**The Bureau will carry out responsibilities consisting of:**

**(i) Attending individualized education program**

**meetings for students with disabilities, when invited;**

**(ii) Working with the local workforce development boards, one-stop centers, and employers to develop work opportunities for students with disabilities, including internships, summer employment and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year, and apprenticeships;**

**(iii) Working with schools, including those carrying**

**out activities under section 614(d) of the IDEA, to**

**coordinate and ensure the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services under this section; and**

**(iv) When invited, attending person-centered planning**

**meetings for individuals receiving services under title XIX of the Social Security Act.**

**k) Services for individuals who have applied for or been determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.**

**As appropriate to the vocational rehabilitation needs of each individual and consistent with each individual's Individualized Plan for Employment, the Bureau will ensure that the following vocational rehabilitation services are available to assist the individual in preparing for, securing, retaining, advancing in or regaining an employment outcome that is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice:\***

**(1) Assessment for determining eligibility, priority for**

**services, and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology.**

 **(2) \*Vocational rehabilitation\* counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice.**

**(3) Referral and other services \*necessary to assist applicants and eligible individuals\* to secure needed services from other providers and agencies,\*including other components of the statewide workforce development system, and to advise those individuals about the client assistance program.\***

**(4) Job related services including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow up services and follow-along services.**

**[(5) Diagnosis and treatment for mental and emotional disorders by personnel who meet state licensure laws.]**

**\*(5)\* [(6)] Physical and mental restoration services including diagnosis and treatment, prosthetic and orthotic devices, eyeglasses and visual services as prescribed by qualified personnel who meet state licensure laws and who are selected by the individual, [and] to the extent that financial support is not readily available from a source \*other than the Bureau\* (such as health insurance or comparable benefit)[, hospitalizations and corrective surgeries to correct or substantially modify a physical or mental condition that constitutes a substantial impediment to employment. Corrective surgery or therapeutic treatment must be of such a nature that it is expected to correct or modify the impediment to employment within a reasonable length of time].**

**\*(6)\* [(7)] Vocational and other training services, including personal and vocational adjustment training, \*advanced training in, but not limited to, a field of science, technology, engineering, mathematics (including computer science), medicine, law, or business);\* books, tools, and other training materials, except that no training or training services in an institution of higher education \*(universities, colleges, community or junior colleges, vocational schools, technical institutes, or hospital schools of nursing or any other post-secondary education institution)\* may be paid for with funds under this part unless maximum efforts have been made by the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program to secure grant assistance in whole or in part from other sources to pay for that training. [Training may be provided at schools, colleges, universities, community rehabilitation programs, by tutor or correspondence, apprenticeship, an organized on-the-job training situation, agency staff and consultants, or some other organized training program that is approved by the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program to provide such training. The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program may use existing fee schedules established by other agencies. In addition, the Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services may establish individual rates with providers of services.]**

**\*(7)\* [(8)] Maintenance for additional costs incurred \*by an individual for expenses, such as food, shelter, and**

**clothing, that are in excess of the normal expenses of the individual and that are necessitated by the individual's participation in an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs or the individual's receipt of vocational rehabilitation services under an Individualized Plan for Employment\* [while participating in assessments for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation services under an IPE].**

**\*(8)\* [(9)] Transportation \*in the form of travel and related expenses that are necessary to enable an applicant or eligible individual to participate in a vocational rehabilitation service, including expenses for training in the use of public transportation vehicles and systems\* [in connection with the rendering of any] vocational rehabilitation service needed by the individual to achieve an employment outcome].**

**\*(9)\* [(10)] Vocational rehabilitation services to family members of an applicant or eligible individual if necessary to enable the applicant or eligible individual to achieve an employment outcome.**

**\*(10)\* [(11)] Interpreter services \*including sign language and oral interpreter services,\* and tactile interpreting services for individuals who are [deaf-blind] \*deafblind provided by qualified personnel\*.**

**\*(11)\* [(12)] Reader services, rehabilitation teaching services, and orientation and mobility services.**

**\*(12)\* [(13)] Technical assistance and other consultation services to conduct market analyses, develop business plans, and otherwise provide resources, to the extent that such resources are authorized to be provided through the statewide workforce \*development\* [investment] system to eligible individuals who are pursuing self-employment or telecommuting or establishing a small business operation \*as an employment outcome\*.**

**\*(13)\* [(14)] Supported employment services.**

**\*(14)\* [(15) On the job or related personal] \*Personal\* assistance services, while the individual is receiving other \*vocational rehabilitation\* services \*necessary to the achievement of an employment outcome\* [consistent with the IPE].**

**\*(15)\* [(16)] Post-employment services necessary to assist the individual to \*maintain\* [retain], regain or advance in employment \*consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice\*.**

**\*(16)\* [(17)] Occupational licenses, tools, equipment, initial stocks, and supplies consistent with Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program policy.**

 **\*(17)\* [(18)] Rehabilitation technology, including vehicular modifications, telecommunications, sensory, and other technological aids and devices \*consistent with Bureau policy\*. [The provision of adaptive equipment will be made after consultation with a Rehabilitation Technologist or other provider skilled in the assessment of such products. Reports from vendors who sell specific adaptive products will not be acceptable for evaluation purposes, but may be reviewed along with other data. Technology provided to clients will be chosen based on the most effective, least expensive products available. For clients who are employed, the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program will not use its funds until maximum effort has been made to obtain employer participation in the provision of standard business equipment that is afforded to all employees regardless of disability. The Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program will further seek to obtain reasonable accommodations from employers, consistent with applicable state and federal laws before committing Program funds for necessary adaptive products unless timing or circumstances as documented in the case record of services make it impractical to do so. Any adaptive equipment provided by the Bureau to the client shall be the property of such client. The cost of maintenance or repair of the equipment shall rest with the client. In circumstances where a client requests, the Bureau shall reimburse the client for the documented cost of the repair and applicable shipping of said equipment to and from the repair location. Temporary loan of equipment to clients to address short-term needs (such as a loan while the client’s equipment is being repaired) shall be assigned through the Bureau loan agreement process and will not transfer in ownership.]**

**\*(18)\* [(19)] Transition services \*for students and youth with disabilities, that facilitate the transition from school to post-secondary life, such as achievement of an employment outcome in competitive integrated employment or Pre-Employment Transition Services for students\*[for students to facilitate the achievement of an employment outcome identified in the IPE].**

**\*(19)\* [(20)] Other goods and services determined necessary for the individual with a disability to achieve an employment outcome.**

**\*(20) Customized Employment, for an individual with a significant disability, that is in competitive integrated employment and that is:**

**(A) Based on an individualized determination of the unique strengths, needs, and interests of the individual with a significant disability;**

**(B) Designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer; and**

**(C) Carried out through flexible strategies\***

**l) Determination of Availability**

**Prior to providing an accommodation or auxiliary aid or service or any vocational rehabilitation services to an eligible individual or to members of the individual's family, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must determine whether comparable services and benefits exist under any other program and whether those services and benefits are available to the individual unless such a determination would interrupt or delay:**

**(1) The progress of the individual toward achieving**

**the employment outcome identified in the individualized**

**plan for employment;**

**(2) An immediate job placement; or**

**(3) The provision of vocational rehabilitation services to any individual who is determined to be at extreme medical risk, based on medical evidence provided by an appropriate qualified medical professional.**

**m) The following vocational rehabilitation services are exempt from a determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits:**

**(1) Assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs.**

**(2) Counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice.**

**(3) Referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide workforce development system, if those services are not available from the Bureau.**

**(4) Job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services.**

**(5) Rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory, and other technological aids and devices.**

**The provision of any of these 5 listed services, when provided as a Post-employment services, are also exempt from a determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits.\***

**[The provision of vocational rehabilitation services in an IPE is contingent upon the Counselor exploring and using other resources offered under any other program for the funding and furnishing of such goods and services except: A determination of the availability of the following comparable services and benefits is not required for the following services:]**

**[a. assessment for determining eligibility, priority for services, and rehabilitation needs;**

**b. counseling, guidance,;**

**c. vocational and other training services, including personal and vocational adjustment training, books (including alternative format books accessible by computer and taped books), tools, and other training materials that are not provided in institutions of higher education (i.e., universities, colleges, community junior colleges, vocational schools, technical institutes, or hospital schools of nursing);**

**d. placement;**

**e. rehabilitation technology; and**

**f. post-employment services consisting of the**

**services listed in a through e, above.]**

**\*n\* [g]) Periodic Review of the IPE**

**Each Individualized Plan for Employment shall be reviewed at least annually, at which time the individual (or in appropriate cases, the parents or guardians of the individual) will be afforded an opportunity to review the program and jointly redevelop and agree to its terms. Any substantive revisions or amendments to the program resulting from such review shall be incorporated into an IPE Amendment and shall become effective when signed by the individual (or parent, family member, guardian, advocate, authorized representative), the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor, and the designated supervisory staff of the vocational rehabilitation program \*(if the amendment was developed by a Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor or the amendment includes graduate school as a service)\*. Each IPE may also be revised as needed. It should be noted that minor changes to the IPE to include additional services to support the implementation of a previously agreed to career goal do not require a formal written amendment. In these circumstances, a verbal agreement between the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor and the client to add the additional service(s), followed up with a letter from the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor to the client summarizing the agreement will be sufficient.**

**\*o\* [h]) Subsequent Determinations of Ineligibility**

**In the event that after an individual has been found eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, any future and subsequent determination of ineligibility shall reflect the inability of the individual to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome. There must be documentation in the case folder as to how and why the individual can no longer be expected to obtain or achieve an employment goal.**

**\*The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor can only make a determination that client is no longer eligible for vocational rehabilitation services after reviewing the basis for the determination with the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, and after providing an opportunity for full consultation with the individual or, as appropriate, with the individual's representative. The individual must be informed in writing with ten (10) business days’ notice, supplemented as necessary by other appropriate modes of communication consistent with the informed choice of the individual, of the ineligibility determination, including the reasons for that determination, and the means by which the individual may express and seek remedy for any dissatisfaction, including the procedures to request a review or appeal of the decision. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must provide the individual with information on services available from the Client Assistance Program and how to contact that program.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will offer to refer the individual to other programs that are part of the one-stop service delivery system under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that can address the individual's training or employment related needs; or to Federal, State, or local programs or service providers, including, as appropriate, independent living programs and extended employment providers, best suited to meet their rehabilitation needs, if the ineligibility determination is based on a finding that the individual has chosen not to pursue, or is incapable of achieving, an employment outcome.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor shall review, within 12 months and annually thereafter if requested by the individual or, if appropriate, by the individual's representative any ineligibility determination that is based on a finding that the individual is incapable of achieving an employment outcome. This review need not be conducted in situations in which the individual has**

**refused it, the individual is no longer present in the**

**State, the individual's whereabouts are unknown, or the**

**individual's medical condition is rapidly progressive or**

**terminal.\***

**[The decision that an individual is no longer capable of achieving an employment goal, and thus not eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, shall only be made in full consultation with the individual, or in appropriate cases with such individual's parents or authorized representative. A Certificate of Ineligibility shall be completed indicating the reason(s) for the decision of ineligibility. This decision will be reviewed at least annually, unless the individual refuses the review, is unavailable, cannot be located, has moved out of state or has a rapidly progressive or terminal medical condition. It will be the responsibility of the Counselor to initiate the first annual review. At that time, the individual will be informed that it is their responsibility to initiate any subsequent reviews.**

**Any individual found ineligible for vocational rehabilitation services shall be advised of their rights, including the right to a review of any Counselor determination. The individual may also request to have the decision of ineligibility reviewed by the State Director. All individuals shall also be informed of the availability of the Client Assistance Program.**

**i) IPE Form**

**The IPE requirement is meant to continue, extend, and formalize the case planning and management practice of setting forth goals and means and time frames for achieving them, as well as to assure client participation and protection of client's rights. The IPE form summarizes and outlines the results of the planning process.**

**References to IPEs being developed jointly with the client also mean (in appropriate cases) with the client's parent, guardian, or other authorized representative.**

**An IPE is required reasonably soon after execution of the Certificate of Eligibility for VR services IPE Amendments are made when indicated.**

**Often what is common knowledge for the Rehabilitation Counselor (e.g., eligibility, closure, etc.) is probably new and complicated to the client. The IPE guards against misunderstanding by requiring that certain specific information be discussed with every client. This information is contained in the IPE form. The counselor should review this section carefully with the client. Additionally, clients must be told of their right to confidentiality, and how their case records will be used. They should also understand that they, or their designee, have the right to review their IPE at any time. Clients should understand that contingencies might arise (e.g., lack of funds, lack of training space), that might alter or affect their program. Moreover, clients should be informed that if subsequently it should be determined that the original employment goal is inappropriate, modifications to the initial IPE will be developed jointly by client and counselor. These modifications might include the setting of a new employment goal or require a decision that any employment goal is unfeasible.**

**The IPE is essentially a plan of action, but it is also a statement of understanding regarding rights, responsibilities, and certain procedures. As a plan it emphasizes action steps and a goal. Much of the background information and analytical recording will be done on the contact report elsewhere in the case record.**

**No service beyond diagnostic can be rendered unless an IPE has been written and approved. Case services may not be authorized to begin prior to the date of an approved IPE. The determination of eligibility, the writing of the IPE, and the initiation of services may, however, occur simultaneously.**

**The counseling process by its nature, involves participation of the client in developing an IPE. As the case study and diagnosis progress and information accumulates, both parties become involved in the development of a program.**

**Key points in the program where joint discussion and agreement are most important are selection of a vocational goal, vocational rehabilitation services, and the providers of services identified in the IPE. These decisions are recorded in the case file. When the IPE is formally written by the Counselor, it is a synthesis of all of the above key points.**

**j) Employment Goal**

**In formulating an employment goal, primary emphasis should be placed upon the determination and achievement of the goal which is to be entered on the IPE with its projected date of completion. This date should take into account anticipated time required for placement and follow-up. The basic program and all changes will relate case data to an employment goal. Placement, in effect, is stressed as a continuous consideration rather than a discrete step near the end of the process.**

**If the goal of the individual is to retain employment, which is in jeopardy as a result of disability related impediments, or changes within the current employment situation, this goal will be entered onto the IPE along with the projected completion date. In situations where a client is working in more than one job, career, or position, and was found eligible based on the primary employment situation, the vocational goal, planned services and providers will focus on retaining the primary employment. Refer to Section 5a of this chapter for the policy and definition related to "primary employment".**

**Summary of Planned Services**

**All planned services shall be entered on the IPE. In most instances, the specificity of the service will be clear, but at times a service may be planned which can only be described categorically rather than specifically (e.g., training in a clerical field rather than naming the specific course of study).**

**Client Responsibilities**

**The IPE shall include a description of the responsibilities of the Bureau and the individual as it relates to the provision of services, and activities that are essential to the achievement of the employment goal.**

**k) Plans for Evaluation**

**When planning for the evaluation of progress toward the achievement of the vocational goal, consideration should be given to the selection of timely, measurable criteria against which to evaluate progress. These may include, but are not limited to, such reports from community rehabilitation programs, medical progress reports, grades attained in training, and other related information. The criteria shall be related to progress toward a vocational goal. In setting the schedule for evaluation of progress, the Counselor should consider the nature of the individual's situation. A formal review of the program is required at least annually. The review will consider jointly with the client, all the original facts as well as accumulated information and performance since initiation of the IPE and may involve a re-evaluation of the services and goal.**

**The results of the scheduled annual review and any interim evaluations of progress shall be discussed with the client, or his or her authorized representative, and summarized as an entry in the case recording.**

**Client Assistance Program**

**The IPE included a reference to information concerning the Client Assistance Program (CAP) which is distributed to all clients who enter Status 12.**

**Concluding Information**

**Except in the case of IPEs or amendments that include higher education at the graduate school or higher level, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors may develop IPEs without prior supervisory review, while Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselors first need to submit a draft version of the plan for supervisory review. Upon obtaining the signature of the client or their authorized representative, plans will then be signed by the Counselor and the Supervisor. At the discretion of the State Director, in consultation with the Supervisor, a qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor may be granted full authority to develop and implement IPEs without the need for a supervisory approval or signature. The client will be provided with a signed copy of the plan and the original shall be filed in the case record of services.]**

**Section 10. - \*Provision of\* Vocational Rehabilitation Services (Status [14 -] 18)**

**[This information is provided as a historical reference to services being provided to clients. It is not required to enter a client into a service status, per streamlining initiatives that have been endorsed by Rehabilitation Services Administration.]**

**a) \*Vocational\* Counseling and Guidance [(Status 14)**

**Policy]**

**\*Vocational counseling and guidance involves the provision of information to the client that facilitates their options for exercising informed choice throughout the vocational rehabilitation process. It includes services such as benefits planning services to assist clients to acquire a better understanding of the impact of participation in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and employment on their public benefits. Vocational counseling and guidance also includes helping individuals pursue an employment outcome consistent with competitive integrated employment including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice in regards to the selection of a career goal and the services and vendors to be included in the process. Review and discussion of labor market information, occupational outlook projections and income potential for specific job titles are also examples of vocational counseling and guidance that the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor can provide directly or coordinate through other sources. Vocational counseling and guidance is a key component throughout the entire vocational rehabilitation process and should remain an integral service to ensure every opportunity for the client to exercise informed choices.\***

**[Counseling and guidance refer to services involving the provision of professional advice and guidance to an individual using methods such as collection and analysis of medical, personal, social, and vocational data; aptitude and interest testing; and personal interviews.**

**Procedures**

**Counseling and guidance are an integral part of the entire rehabilitation process and often begin during the intake interview. All clients must be provided counseling and guidance services, regardless of fiscal constraints or any priority ranking imposed by an Order of Selection. Counseling and guidance includes the relationship developed between the Counselor and client which enables the Counselor to help clients deal with matters pertaining to personal adjustment, work readiness, job seeking, and retention. Counselors also work with placement, potential employers, and other professionals on their client's behalf as part of counseling and guidance activities. Referrals of the individual will be made to other agencies, as appropriate, to secure needed services which are not available under the Act.**

**Continued counseling will be provided to each client from the initial interview through placement and follow-up. The type and frequency of counseling will be determined by individual needs. Its goal is to help the person with a disability make the best use of his or her personal and environmental resources, as well as the services of VR and BESB, in order to achieve an employment outcome. In this relationship, the emphasis is placed on self-determination. The client is seen as a dynamic, changing individual with strength and dignity who must progress at his or her own speed toward his or her own goals, and the Counselor as the partner who helps only when needed, who suggests, but does not demand, and who interprets, but does not decide the course of action.**

**IPE Requirements**

**When the Counselor and client determine that counseling and guidance are the only services necessary to achieve the vocational objective, an IPE must be developed to reflect this service and the case may be placed in Status 14. Counseling and guidance must be planned, ongoing, and systematic. This must be documented in the IPE along with measurable goals to be accomplished. Progress towards the goal should be evaluated and documented in the case record.]**

**\*b) Referral Services**

**Referral and related services include assisting clients to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide workforce development system, as well as the Client Assistance Program. Referral services are made only after providing the client with an explanation of the other services that are available and the agency or agencies that provide such services. This will permit the client to make informed decisions as to whether the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor should initiate the referral on behalf of the client, or whether the client desires to directly connect with the agency. All referrals to other agencies shall only occur after the client provides written authorization to the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to provide the necessary referral information to the other agency.\***

**\*c)\* [b)] Physical Restoration [(Status 16)**

**Policy]**

**Physical and mental restoration services mean those services which are \*likely\* [necessary] to correct or substantially modify, within a reasonable period of time, a physical or mental \*impairment\* [condition] which is stable or slowly progressive, and which \*constitutes\* [results in] a substantial impediment \*to the\* [that affects the] employment of the individual. Physical restoration services are solely intended for the purpose of enabling an individual to participate in the vocational rehabilitation process leading toward a successful employment outcome. Physical restoration services are not intended for the purpose of providing routine medical care (such as yearly medical check-ups) or for attending to medical needs that do not constitute impediments to employment.**

**Examples of physical restoration services include:**

**(1) corrective surgery or therapeutic treatment that is likely, within a reasonable period of time, to correct or modify substantially a stable or slowly progressive physical or mental impairment that constitutes a substantial impediment to employment;**

**(2) diagnosis of and treatment for mental or emotional disorders by qualified personnel \*in accordance with State licensure laws\*;**

**(3) dentistry;**

**(4) nursing services;**

**(5) necessary hospitalization (either inpatient or outpatient care) in connection with surgery or treatment and clinic services;**

**(6) drugs and supplies;**

**(7) prosthetic \*and\* [,] orthotic [, or other assistive] devices[, including hearing aids, essential to obtaining or retaining employment];**

**(8) eyeglasses and visual services, including visual training, and the examination and services necessary for the prescription and provision of eyeglasses, contact lenses, microscopic lenses, telescopic lenses, and other special visual aids prescribed by qualified personnel \*in accordance with State licensure laws\*;**

**(9) podiatry;**

**(10) physical therapy;**

**(11) occupational therapy;**

**(12) speech or hearing therapy;**

**(13) mental health services;**

**(14) treatment of either acute or chronic medical complications and emergencies that are associated with or arise out of the provision of physical and mental restoration services, or that are inherent in the condition under treatment;**

**(15) special services for the treatment of individuals with end-stage renal disease, including transplantation, dialysis, artificial kidneys, and supplies; and**

**(16) other medical or medically-related rehabilitation services.**

**[Procedures**

**The purpose of physical and mental restoration services is to correct or substantially modify, over a reasonable period of time, a physical or mental condition which is stable or slowly progressive that directly affects the employability of the client. Provision of such services must be based upon the recommendation of a physician. These services are provided without regard to financial need, but the Counselor should take into consideration comparable benefits and services such as compensation or insurance.**

**There is no limit as to time or money which can be spent to restore an individual to maximum functioning. Instead, a decision for these services is made by the Counselor and client, or his or her representative, on the basis of the reasonable requirements of the individual case and the potential for employment, after discussion of the case with the supervisor as necessary.**

**The case is placed in Status 16 "Physical Restoration", when the client starts to receive medical, surgical, psychiatric or therapeutic treatment, or is being fitted with prosthetic, orthotic, or other assistive devices related to the employment of the individual. The case should remain in this status until physical restoration services are completed or services are terminated prior to completion.]**

**\*d)\* [c)] Vocational and Other Training Services [(Status 18)]**

**(1) General Information**

**[Policy]**

**Training is a major \*vocational rehabilitation\* [VR] service necessary to prepare the client for employment. Training may be academic, vocational, pre-vocational, personal adjustment, or independent living skills development. Training may be provided at schools, colleges, universities, vocational schools, technical institutes, community rehabilitation programs, by tutor or correspondence, apprenticeship, an organized on-the-job training situation, agency staff and consultants, or some other organized training program that is approved by the \*Department of Rehabilitation Services\* [Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program] to provide such training. The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program may use existing fee schedules established by other agencies. In addition, the Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services may negotiate individual rates with providers of services to purchase such training. No training or training services in an institution of higher education may be paid for with funds under this part unless maximum efforts have been made by the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program to secure grant assistance in whole or in part from other sources to pay for that training.**

**[Procedures**

**A case may placed in Status 18 (Training) when the client begins receiving one or a combination of the following types of training: personal or vocational adjustment training; job coaching; on-the-job training; training in the use of artificial limbs, hearing aids or other appliances; remedial training; literacy training; vocational training; academic training; speech or hearing training which is not medically directed; lip reading; mobility training; rehabilitation teaching; adaptive technology training; or any other kind of organized training needed to meet the vocational rehabilitation needs of the individual receiving services. However, for a client who is receiving training services while employed in a position that is consistent with the IPE, status 22 may be used to signify the employment of the individual.**

**Training also may cover necessary books and training supplies and includes such items as: paper, pencils, notebooks, etc.; textbooks and learning aids; training supplies, special supplies such as gymnasium suits or shoes, laboratory aprons or nurses uniforms; tools, machines, and other small equipment used in vocational and adjustment training.**

**In all cases, the length of training time is determined by the time necessary for that individual to acquire sufficient knowledge and skills to meet the objectives in the IPE to achieve the employment objective.**

**Counselors should make arrangements for regular counseling sessions with each client in training.**

**Whatever training is provided, the client should understand clearly that the sole reason for providing this training is to prepare him/her for his or her vocational objective, and he/she will be expected to pursue the course necessary to reach this goal. This emphasis is particularly important for college students who may sign up for courses outside of their vocational area and fail to complete a major in their planned field. All trainees and students are expected to maintain a grade average which will allow them to complete the course successfully.**

**Information**

**1. The Counselor and client must determine whether training is a necessary service to achieve a vocational goal. When determining training needs and evaluating specific programs, the Counselor must take a comprehensive look at the client's needs and potential in order to make a decision that will most likely result in success. This process must take into account the individual's unique strengths, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests, functional capacities, transferable skills, job requirements, and employment outlook.**

**2. All training is to be provided as part of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and must relate to the achievement of a vocational goal.**

**3. The selection of the specific program must be based upon the individual needs of the client and the institution's ability to best meet those needs in the preparation of the client toward the vocational goal. To the extent possible, all training shall be provided in an integrated setting.**

**4. Regular progress reports are required, as outlined in the IPE. Continued authorization of training should be based on the demonstration of reasonable progress.**

**The Counselor's responsibility continues throughout the length of the training period in order to ensure that the plan is suitable to the needs of the client. If necessary, the IPE should be revised to meet changing needs. The Counselor should make arrangements for regular contact with a client in training.]**

**(2) On-The-Job Training (OJT)**

**[Policy]**

**The purpose of on-the-job training (OJT) is to assist a client to acquire knowledge and skills necessary to perform the tasks in a specific occupation. On-the-job training experiences may also be used during a trial work experience [period] for purposes of determining if an applicant with a significant disability is capable of benefiting from vocational rehabilitation services. An OJT is encouraged when training opportunities may not be available in a particular field. [It is especially well suited for clients who may have trouble transferring skills.] OJT’s are to be considered where practical because it provides the client with paid employment during the training process, and can lead [to] directly to employment for the individual.**

**\*(A)\* [(i)] General \*Requirements\* [Procedures]**

**\*(i)\* [1]. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor and client must determine whether training is needed and if an OJT is the most appropriate method to gain the necessary skills.**

**\*(ii)\*[2]. The appropriate tasks, time frames, and processes that will be included in the training program must be determined by the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor, client, and employer, and the service must be \*included in the trial work experience plan, IPE or subsequent amendments to the IPE\* [planned for in the IPE or subsequent amendment if the service is being provided as part of a new career direction].**

**\*(iii)\*[3]. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor must negotiate an hourly fee for training with the employer[/trainer]. The terms of the training must be specified in a contract \*form provided by the Bureau and\* agreed upon by all of the parties [(see forms immediately following this section)]. The training contract \*will include\* [should be based upon] the total number of hours of training at a specified \*hourly\* rate. Generally, the number of hours necessary per week diminishes over the length of the contract as the client's skills increase. This plan may be amended by mutual agreement or terminated by any of the parties involved.**

**\*(iv)\* [4]. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor must require the employer to submit a monthly progress report [(see sample immediately following this section)].**

**The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor should have regular contact with the employer and client during the training to assure that the client is acquiring the needed skills [(see employer contact form immediately following this section)].**

**\*(v)\* [5]. The employer[/trainer] will be responsible for providing the same \*wages,\* benefits \*and level of integration\* that are provided other employees \*without disabilities\* in similar positions and will adhere to all federal, state, and local labor laws and regulations. Wages will be paid in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).**

**\*(vi)\* [6]. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor should advise the client that he/she is responsible for maintaining regular attendance and adhering to the rules of the company. The client should perceive his or her role as an employee and maintain an awareness that the employment may be terminated for cause as with any other employee.**

**[Information**

**An on-the-job training opportunity should be a choice afforded to all clients, when appropriate, in lieu of other forms of training.**

**Although theoretical, training may be included as part of an OJT program, most of the training provided by the employer/trainer is "hands on" experience. The goal is for the client to learn to work with minimal direction, work with other staff members, and upon completion of the OJT program, possesses the same level of skill as entry level employees in that occupation. To the extent feasible, the skills achieved should not be peculiar to placement in only one company. The Counselor and client may consult with the Apprenticeship and Job Training divisions of the State Labor Department to help determine appropriate tasks and time frames to be included in the OJT contract.**

**The length of time allotted for an OJT program should be equal to the time required to learn the techniques, acquire the information, and develop the skills needed for average performance in a specific job situation. This information can usually be determined through the Specific Vocational Preparation (SVP) Information available in the Worker Trait Group publication and the Occupational Outlook Handbook. Examples of factors which could affect the length of training time are the significance of client's disability, self-care needs, mobility, work habits, and vocational preparation.**

**ON-THE-JOB TRAINING CONTRACT**

**Immediately following this section are copies of the contracts that will be used for OJT and the evaluation forms that the employer will fill out on a monthly basis.**

**Determining the Reimbursement Amount]**

**\*(vii)\*The amount the employer is reimbursed for the training is equal to the wage of the employee who will be training the new hire. For example, if the employee \*providing the training\* makes $11.00 an hour, then the employer will be reimbursed $11.00 for each hour of training.**

**If there is more than one individual within the company who will be providing the training to the employee, the amount of reimbursement is 130% of the \*customary\* [entry level] wage for the position the client is training for.**

**[Hours of Training**

**The total hours of training required is determined by the employer and Counselor. As the weeks progress, the total hours of training needed should decrease.**

**Evaluations and Billing**

**To track the progress of the client, the employer will fill out a monthly evaluation form. At the time that this is sent in, the employer should bill for the hours of training that are completed.**

**State of Connecticut**

**Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind**

**Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

**On-The-Job Training Agreement**

**(Address)**

**Attention:**

**Thank you for accepting as an on-the-job trainee. The responsibilities of each party are stated below along with the agreed upon hours of training and the financial reimbursement amounts.**

**is to be trained by you as a beginning on and ending on .**

**The agreed upon payment rate is as follows:**

**$ per hour for hours for a total of $ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**In order for us to evaluate progress, please submit the training progress reports to our office on a monthly basis. Please submit your invoice for payment with each progress report so that we may process your payment. Enclosed is a supply of progress report forms and invoices for payment.**

**It is understood that will be placed on your payroll during this training period and that he/she will be covered under Workmen's Compensation, Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, Minimum Wage Law, IRS withholding, and any other usual company benefits. The agreed starting wage is $ per hour for hours per week. He/she will work from the hours of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_a.m. to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_p.m. on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .**

**Please notify me at if a problem arises so that we may take appropriate action to help resolve it.**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ understands that continuation of sponsorship by this office is dependent upon regular attendance, acceptable performance in the tasks in which he/she is being trained, and on cooperation with you.**

**The following persons are in accord with this agreement:**

**BESB/VR Services:**

**Date:**

**Employer:**

**Date:**

**State of Connecticut**

**Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind**

**Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

**EVALUATION FORM**

**Employer:**

**Trainee Name:**

**Please discuss this evaluation with the trainee, as it will give him/her a better understanding of the job responsibilities. PLEASE MAKE COMMENTS.**

**CRITERIA POOR FAIR AVG GOOD EXC.**

**Attendance 1 2 3 4 5**

**Punctuality 1 2 3 4 5**

**Quality 1 2 3 4 5**

**Responsibility 1 2 3 4 5**

**Knowledge 1 2 3 4 5**

**Interpersonal Skills 1 2 3 4 5**

**Meets Expectations 1 2 3 4 5**

**Overall Evaluation 1 2 3 4 5**

**COMMENTS:**

**Trainee Signature:**

**Supervisor Signature:**

**Employer Contact Sheet**

**COMPANY NAME:**

**ADDRESS:**

**TRANSPORTATION:**

**PHONE NUMBER: CONTACT(S):**

**POSITION:**

**JOB DESCRIPTION (DUTIES,**

**SKILLS NEEDED, QUALIFICATIONS):**

**WAGE:**

**HOURS:**

**BENEFITS:**

**COUNSELOR:]**

**(3) Personal Adjustment Training**

**[Policy]**

**Personal Adjustment Training refers to any training given for one, or a combination, of the following reasons:**

**(A) to assist an individual to acquire personal habits, attitudes, and skills which will enable the individual to function effectively in spite of a disability;**

**(B) to develop or increase work tolerance prior to engaging in pre-vocational or vocational training or in employment;**

**(C) to develop work habits and to orient the individual to employment; or**

**(D) to develop skills or techniques for the specific purpose of enabling the individual to compensate for the loss of a member of the body or the loss of a sensory function.**

**Prior to making a determination that out of state residential personal adjustment training programs are necessary for achievement of the \*employment outcome\* [vocational goal] as identified in the Individualized Plan for Employment, the client will participate in an independent living \*evaluation\* [needs assessment] with a Rehabilitation Teacher [mutually selected by the client and] \*employed by\* the Bureau. Services available through an in-state option as documented in the \*rehabilitation teaching evaluation\* [needs assessment] shall be given first preference. In situations where no feasible in-state option exists to address the client’s \*employment outcome\* [vocational goal], the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor and client shall review the options available for residential personal adjustment programs in order \*for the client to make an informed decision\* [to choose the most effective, least expensive option].**

**For training at community rehabilitation programs, the Bureau may use the approved fee schedules from other agencies, including rates established by the public Vocational Rehabilitation Programs of the applicable state. In addition, the Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services may negotiate and establish rates.**

**\*Progress reports are required at periodic intervals agreed to between the provider and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and continued authorizations for training should be based on the demonstration of reasonable progress and the documented need for additional training.\***

**[Procedures**

**1. The Counselor and client must determine if personal adjustment training is a necessary service to achieve a vocational goal. When determining training needs and evaluating specific programs, the Counselor, with the client, must take a comprehensive look at the client's needs and potential in order to make a decision that will most likely result in success. This process must take into account the individual's unique strengths, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests, functional capacities, transferable skills, job requirements, and employment outlook.**

**2. All personal adjustment training is to be provided as part of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and must relate to the achievement of a vocational goal. In cases of trial work experiences [or extended evaluation]s, personal adjustment training may be provided to assess eligibility.**

**3. The selection of the specific program must be based upon the individual needs of the client and the institution's ability to best meet those needs in the preparation of the client toward the vocational goal. The use of in-state personal adjustment training options shall be considered first, where practical, and recommended by a Rehabilitation Teacher in a documented needs assessment. Where an in-state option is not available or practical, given the specific training needs of the individual, the Counselor will discuss residential options with the client. To ensure that clients have the opportunity to exercise informed choice in the selection of training providers, the Counselor shall explain the services that are being recommended through the needs assessment, including the training objectives. Where an in-state option exists to provide these services, the Counselor shall provide the opportunity for the client to speak with the recommended service providers to review the scope of services that are available.**

**4. Progress reports are required for each month of training. Continued authorization of training should be based on the demonstration of reasonable progress and the documented need for additional training. Objectives to be addressed in subsequent months of training should be clearly detailed by the community rehabilitation provider.**

**The Counselor's responsibility continues throughout the length of the personal adjustment training period in order to ensure that the plan is suitable to the needs of the client. If necessary, the IPE should be revised to meet changing needs. The Counselor should make arrangements for regular contact with a client in personal adjustment training.]**

**(4) Post-Secondary Training**

**[Policy]**

**Post-secondary training programs are those which, 1) are offered specifically to individuals who have completed a high school diploma, high school equivalency, or who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance. They include programs at institutions of higher education (e.g., universities, colleges, community/ junior colleges, vocational schools, technical institutes, or hospital schools of nursing)\*, whether on-site at a physical location, or through virtual training that uses on-line, computer based technologies\*. Post-secondary institutions must be accredited for the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program to use their services. Clients being considered for post-secondary training must have a high school diploma or GED. When possible, high school records, etc. will be obtained for the case record. [If documenting evidence is unavailable, appropriate psychological testing may be provided and reviewed by the Counselor.]**

**Financial participation by the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program in providing training and training services in institutions of higher education shall be made in accordance with an appropriately completed Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and under the following conditions:**

**\*(A)\* [(a)] No training in institutions of higher education shall be paid for by the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program unless maximum efforts have been made to secure comparable benefits or grant assistance, in whole or in part, from other sources to pay for such training. Grant assistance, for purposes of this policy, refers to basic grant entitlement under student financial aid programs. Merit scholarships are not defined as grant assistance and shall not be included in any calculation of unmet need. Where such scholarships are designated to a specific category such as tuition and fees or room and board, Vocational Rehabilitation funding may cover the unpaid balance of that category, up to the remaining unmet need and the allowable fee schedule rate as defined in subsection \*(H)\*[(h)] of this section.**

**\*(B)\* [(b)] In pursuing a determination of available comparable benefits, the client shall \*be informed by the Counselor of the requirement to\* make application to the training institution's financial aid office (FAO) and shall cooperate in the provision of all information required by the FAO in its calculation of the client's eligibility for financial assistance.**

**\*(C)\* [(c)] The client shall give written authorization to the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program and the FAO to exchange information relevant to the determination of eligibility for financial assistance in accordance with the State Personal Data Act and regulations thereunder.**

**\*(D)\* [(d)] Application by the client to the FAO will be made in sufficient time to permit a decision to be rendered by the FAO prior to the starting date of training.**

**\*(E)\* [(e)] A client will not be required to apply for funds available to him/her through student loans to meet the costs of training nor will the value of the student loan be included in any calculation of unmet need. In cases where a student voluntarily applies a student loan to the cost of a specific category such as tuition and fees or room and board, Vocational Rehabilitation funding may cover the unpaid balance of that category, up to the remaining unmet need and the allowable fee schedule rate as defined in subsection \*(H)\* [(h)] of this section. Clients will be counseled on this policy to ensure understanding that they are not obligated to expend any loan funds to cover costs that would otherwise be paid for by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.**

**\*(F)\* [(f)] Financial participation by the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program in the provision of such training will be limited to the amount of the client's unmet need. Client work study or summer earnings shall be included as part of the calculation of client financial need only when the client is realistically able to participate in a work study program or has summer earnings.**

**\*(G)\* [(g)] The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program shall not substitute its vocational rehabilitation funds for the family contribution portion as determined by the FAO. If the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program determines that computation by the FAO is clearly erroneous and time or other circumstances make it impossible or impractical for the client to have the computation by the FAO corrected, the State Director may substitute funds from vocational rehabilitation for the family contribution in an amount not to exceed the amount by which the computation by the FAO is determined to be in error. This policy shall not apply to expenses that will be incurred by a client which result from his or her disability. \*A letter from the FAO which clearly states that neither financial aid nor a family contribution are available is an acceptable substitute for a completed financial aid award form.\***

**\*(H)\* [(h) For all students with Individualized Plan for Employments (IPEs) or Amendments that are developed after February 1, 1996 which initiate training services in institutions of higher education (such as colleges, universities, and post-secondary vocational or technical training programs), the] \*The\* cost of tuition/fees and room/board attributable to the course of study shall be based upon such costs at Central Connecticut State University. [The costs of such services for students who had an IPE or Amendment in effect prior to February 1, 1996 that included training services provided by institutions of higher education may be based on costs for these training services at the University of Connecticut.] The maximum level of BESB Vocational Rehabilitation funding for these services will not exceed the unmet need of the client and will be based on the costs associated with each category of service (tuition/fees representing one category and room/ board representing the other category) at Central Connecticut State University [or the University of Connecticut, as applicable]. For programs of study that are not available at Central Connecticut State University, the University of Connecticut costs shall apply. If the program of study is not available at either school, then the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program may pay such costs as are reasonable for the client to attend the program. Special support services, provided to enable a client to participate in training, will be paid above and beyond the cost of attending the college or university.**

**\*(I)\* [(i)] All clients who participate in training at institutions of higher education will be required to maintain an overall grade point average \*(GPA)\* of 2.0 or higher. \*The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, by letter, must advise any student whose overall GPA falls below this level that the student will have one semester to raise the overall GPA to 2.0, or they will not receive Vocational Rehabilitation Program funding for subsequent semesters. When the student can verify to the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor an overall 2.0 GPA, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will be authorized to resume financial support.\* [Any client who falls below this level will be subject to withholding of Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program funds for subsequent semesters until such time as the client can achieve the minimum grade point standard].**

**\*(J)\* [(j)] All clients must submit grades to their \*Vocational\* Rehabilitation Counselors at the end of each semester. Funding for all subsequent semesters will be contingent upon submittal of satisfactory grades. \*To avoid unnecessary delays in the authorization of funding for spring semesters, it is understood that fall semester grades may not arrive in sufficient time to be used for review prior to school deadlines for funding commitments. In these instances, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors may use grades obtained from the semester immediately preceding the fall semester (summer or prior spring term) to reach a determination that the student is in good standing with the training program. For students who have marginal grade point averages, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor can consider requesting a deferment of billing until grades are available.\***

**\*(K)\* [(k)] Students shall participate in full time training as defined by the institution, unless mitigating factors can be documented as to the reason(s) that make it unfeasible for this level of participation.**

**\*(L)\* [(l)] Students who are ineligible to receive financial aid due to a prior history of default on a student loan must have a documented repayment plan in place with the educational institution or lending authority before Bureau funds may be considered for higher education training.**

**\*(M)\* [(m)] Prior to the development of an IPE or amendment that includes graduate or doctorate level education, the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor shall review and approve the IPE or amendment prior to implementation.**

**\*(N) Summer school attendance will be considered if necessary due to course sequencing or if necessary because of disability-related needs. Sponsorship for summer school may also be considered when it can be demonstrated that it is cost-effective, by allowing the client to complete the program sooner.**

**(O) Students are to contact the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at the end of each semester or term to discuss progress, or sooner if there are difficulties encountered which may affect their successful participation in the program.**

**(P) Any deviation from the IPE must be discussed with the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and agreed to through an IPE Amendment prior to implementation.\***

**[Procedures**

**(i) General Procedures**

**1. The Counselor and client must determine whether post-secondary training is necessary to achieve a vocational goal.**

**2. All training must be provided under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to achieve a vocational goal.**

**3. Although clients have the choice to select any accredited college or post-secondary program which provides training toward their vocational goal, Bureau funding is limited to the cost of a comparable program within the state college/university system including community colleges as described above. This may, therefore, influence the client's final choice of school. The final dollar amount of funding will be determined using the procedure for use of financial aid and other comparable benefits.**

**The only exceptions to this are:**

**a) the program is not available within the state college or university system, or**

**b) the client, due to his or her disability, needs special services not available within the state system.**

**4. The student/client must be informed that**

**he/she must:**

**a) apply for aid through the Financial Aid Office (FAO) at the institution in a timely manner to ensure Bureau sponsorship for the training period. The applicant or client must also give written authorization to the Bureau and the FAO to exchange information relevant to the determination of eligibility for financial assistance;**

**b) attend classes as stipulated by the institution;**

**c) maintain at least the minimum grades (2.0 GPA where that grading system is used) necessary for successful completion of the program; and**

**d) contact the Counselor at the end of each semester or term to discuss the progress and provide to the Counselor a written copy of transcripts of the grades achieved during that term or semester. Clients should contact the Counselor whenever any problems arise which may affect their successful participation in the program;**

**e) discuss any deviation from the planned program established in the IPE. Mutual agreement on any change is necessary prior to the continuation of any Bureau-sponsored program.**

**5. The Counselor shall complete the Bureau financial aid worksheet (BESB 100) to determine the amount of VR financial participation, after receiving the form from the school's financial aid officer (FAO).**

**6. Summer school attendance will be considered if necessary due to course sequencing or is necessary because of disability-related needs. Sponsorship for summer school may also be considered when it can be demonstrated that it is cost-effective, by allowing the client to complete the program sooner.**

**7. A student is required to maintain a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher. The Counselor, by letter, must advise any student whose overall GPA falls below this level that the student will have one semester to raise the overall GPA to 2.0, or they will not receive VR funding for subsequent semesters. When the student can verify to VR an overall 2.0 GPA, the Counselor will be authorized to resume financial support.**

**8. All students will be required to participate in the post-secondary educational program on a full-time basis (usually 12 or more credit hours per semester as determined by the training institution). The only exception to this would be when documentation substantiates that because of disability-related needs and/or unique personal circumstances, the client is unable to enroll on a full-time basis.**

**9. To avoid unnecessary delays in the authorization of funding for spring semesters, it is understood that fall semester grades may not arrive in sufficient time to be used for review prior to school deadlines for funding commitments. In these instances, Counselors may use grades obtained from the semester immediately preceding the fall semester (summer or prior spring term) to reach a determination that the student is in good standing with the training program. In these situations, the student is expected to submit grades immediately upon receiving them. For students who have marginal grade point averages, the Counselor can consider requesting a deferment of billing until grades are available.**

**(ii) Use of Comparable Benefits for Services in Institutions of Higher Education**

**In accordance with federal regulations, the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind has formalized a working relationship with the Financial Aid Officers of Connecticut for the purpose of implementing financial assistance as a comparable benefit. Under these regulations VR must require clients to make application for, and accept those comparable benefit services to which they are entitled from another agency, as long as such services are adequate and do not interfere with achieving the client's employment goal. If the eligible VR client refuses to apply for services for which he/she may be eligible or accept services to which he/she is entitled from another agency as a comparable benefit when receipt of such services are adequate or do not interfere with achieving the employment goal, VR cannot provide the service using VR funds. This policy does not apply to expenses to be incurred by the client which result from his or her disability.**

**In those cases where post-secondary educational or vocational training is an integral part of the IPE, the VR Counselor will provide the client with a financial aid form (BESB 100), who in turn, will forward it to the financial aid officer (FAO) of the institution where the client is planning to attend. The (FAO) will complete Part B of the financial aid form and return it to the VR Counselor. The Counselor will use this information to determine VR's financial participation in the training program. The VR Counselor will complete Part C of the financial aid form and return it to the FAO. A copy of this financial aid form will be placed in the client's case record of services. Only a letter from the FAO which clearly states that neither financial aid nor a family contribution are available is an acceptable substitute for a completed BESB 100. Students who are ineligible for financial aid due to default status on prior student loans must make arrangements for repayment of the loan before the Counselor can make a determination as to the level of VR funding. Documentation of the repayment arrangement will be recorded in the case record of services.**

**(iii) Bureau Financial Participation**

**1. Authorizations should be made for only one semester at a time.**

**2. VR financial support for post-secondary educational programs can only be approved for those cases where the client has made proper and timely application to the appropriate Financial Aid Officer (FAO) for consideration of comparable benefits. The maximum level of funding cannot exceed the unmet need and the applicable fee schedule.**

**3. The maximum level of VR support (not including special needs) is outlined above in the Policy Section. The only exception will be an approved educational plan that requires specialized curricula available only at a more expensive program. All exceptions must be reviewed/approved by the VR Supervisor and the State Director.]**

**\*(Q)\* [(iv)] Reader Service**

**[Policy]**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program may provide reader services to support the participation of an individual in training. The service may also be provided to enable clients to participate in diagnostic evaluations, and for clients who have a temporary need for the service in an employment situation.**

**Since the Americans with Disabilities Act requires institutions of higher education to provide accommodations to permit persons with disabilities to have equal access to training programs, it is assumed that all institutions will comply with this law.**

**In order to facilitate a spirit of cooperative agreement with institutions of higher education, the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program is prepared to match the number of hours of support services provided by the training program. Students with disabilities are responsible for working with the Disability Services Coordinator at the training program to identify the need for reader services and other support services necessary to fully participate in the program of study. The maximum level of Bureau sponsorship will be 250 hours per semester, unless the student can demonstrate through clear documentation the need for additional hours. Any such request for additional hours must be sent to the State Director in writing. \*The State Director may allow for hours beyond 250 in situations where the student can provide written documentation that substantiates the need for additional reader service hours that the educational institution is not able to provide. Requests must be approved by the State Director, in writing, prior to the client incurring additional reader service hours beyond the authorized amount.\***

**\* [The Director will then convene a peer review committee to evaluate the request. The peer review committee shall consist of three current or former recipients of Vocational Rehabilitation Services who have received reader services from the Bureau in the past. The members of this committee shall be selected though mutual agreement between the State Director and the State Rehabilitation Council.]**

**The fee schedule for payment of reader services shall be the prevailing wage as established by the fee schedule of the Institution of Higher Education that the client is attending, or the approved rate as established in the Department of Rehabilitation Services fee schedule, but shall not be less than the minimum wage established by the State [of Connecticut] \*in which the reader service is being provided to the client.**

**It is the responsibility of the client to obtain and hire a reader. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will issue an authorization for reader services to the client, who will monitor the hours and ensure that authorized levels are not exceeded. If a client anticipates that the authorized amount of hours will not be sufficient due to unforeseen circumstances, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must be notified in advance of exceeding the pre-authorized amount. Requests received after exceeding authorized levels of services will not be approved. Arrangements for additional reader service hours should be discussed with the Disability Coordinator at the school before additional Vocational Rehabilitation funding will be considered in these situations. Any client who anticipates a need in excess of 250 hours in a semester, must make a written request to the State Director, clearly detailing the need for the excess hours.**

**Clients are to be provided with Certificates of Reader Services, which must be filled out completely by the person(s) providing the reader services for payments to be processed.\***

**[Procedure**

**The need for reader services should be discussed with the client as part of the development process for the Individualized Plan for Employment. Clients are to be notified of the process to follow in contacting the Disability Coordinator in situations where the service is being provided at an institution of higher education. The Counselor shall act as an advocate in situations where a post-secondary institution is reluctant to provide support services as required by the ADA. The Counselor shall obtain verification of the level of reader service that is being offered by the school and then identify the remaining need for services through consultation with the client. Any situation where the need for reader services exceeds an equal co-sharing of the hours with the institution of higher education must be discussed with the rehabilitation supervisor before commitments for funding can be made.**

**It is the responsibility of the client to obtain and hire a reader. The Counselor will issue an authorization for reader services to the client, who will monitor the hours and ensure that authorized levels are not exceeded. If a client anticipates that the authorized amount of hours will not be sufficient due to unforeseen circumstances, the Counselor must be notified in advance of exceeding the pre-authorized amount. Requests received after exceeding authorized levels of services will not be approved. Arrangements for additional reader service hours should be discussed with the Disability Coordinator at the school before additional VR funding will be considered in these situations. Any client who anticipates a need in excess of 250 hours in a semester, must make a written request to the State Director, clearly detailing the need for the excess hours.**

**Clients are to be provided with Certificates of Reader Services, which must be filled out completely by the person(s) providing the reader services for payments to be processed.**

**The Counselor should remind the client to submit the required paperwork for reimbursement monthly to expedite payment. All billing invoice forms (CO-17) must be accompanied by completed and signed Certificates of Reader Service.]**

**\*(R)\* [(v)] Books and Supplies**

**[Policy]**

**Books and supplies, including notebooks, software necessary to participate in coursework, pens, etc. may be provided to enable a client to participate in training consistent with his or her Individualized Plan for Employment. [This service may also be provided to support the participation of a client in a diagnostic evaluation at an institution of higher education.]**

 **The Vocational Rehabilitation Program will provide up to $100 per course for a student enrolled in an approved institution of higher education to provide training. The State Director may allow costs beyond this amount in situations where the student can provide written documentation that substantiates higher costs for training materials that the student is not able to reasonably contribute toward. Requests for additional funding beyond the standard amount should be submitted to the State Director, in writing, prior to making purchases beyond the authorized amount.**

**Since a client may require two sets of books in order to have one set available for a reader to record audio tapes from, the Bureau will permit the purchase of one full set of books without consideration of available comparable benefits. However, where the cost of books and supplies was used by the financial aid officer to calculate the level of unmet need of a student, the total level of unmet need cannot be exceeded when calculating the funding level for books and supplies.**

**In situations where a textbook or other educational material(s) are required for participation in the classroom or educational experience, and the combined cost of the textbook or other educational material(s) and any required adaptations to make the textbook or other educational material(s) accessible is in excess of $1,000, BESB shall enter in to a cost sharing partnership with the college, university or educational institution at which the textbook or other educational material(s) will be used. If a cost-sharing arrangement cannot be obtained, or a satisfactory response cannot be obtained within a timely manner, Vocational Rehabilitation will purchase the textbook or educational material(s), provided that documentation of such refusal to enter in to a cost-sharing partnership by the college, university or other institution of higher education is provided.**

**Any cost-sharing partnerships entered by Vocational Rehabilitation, or the receipt of documentation of a refusal of participation in such a partnership on the part of the college, university or other institution of higher education, will insure the student will be provided the textbook or educational material(s) in a timely manner so as to not adversely affect his/her progress in the program. The student shall not be responsible for negotiating the cost-sharing arrangement and his/her program will not be delayed due to these negotiations.**

**\*Receipts verifying the provision of books and supplies must be submitted with the billing invoice for payments to be processed. Clients who choose to have authorizations provided directly to them must be informed by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor of the need to provide receipts.\***

**[Procedure**

**Clients may obtain books and supplies to support their participation in training at accredited institutions of higher education. The service must be planned for in the Individualized Plan for Employment, or amendment to the program. The Counselor will review the need for this service with the client prior to the beginning of each semester. Authorizations for books and supplies will be issued to the bookstore whenever possible. However, clients may receive authorizations directly to expedite the provision of this service. Clients are to be advised by the Counselor that authorized levels cannot be exceeded. Any unanticipated need for additional books and supplies must be reviewed with the Counselor in advance of purchase in order to be considered.**

**Where the cost of books and supplies was included in the calculation to determine the level of unmet need for funding of a program of study, the total unmet need cannot be exceeded when considering the level of funding.**

**If a client has not made application for financial aid, then one set of books may be purchased at the cost of up to $100 per course as covered in the policy section.**

**If the cost of any individual textbook or educational material(s), combined with the conversion of the text or material into an accessible format is projected to exceed $1,000, the Counselor shall work with the institution of higher education to negotiate a cost-sharing arrangement for the cost of the textbook or material(s) and the conversion costs. The agreement shall be documented in a letter or email by the Counselor to the educational institution. Should the institution either refuse to enter into such an agreement or delay the development of such an agreement by more than 10 business days from the Counselor’s initiation of a written request, or within 60 calendar days of the start date of the program or coursework, whichever comes first, the Counselor shall document the delay or refusal in the case record of services, and then proceed with authorization of the books and/or materials. The Counselor shall notify the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor of such delays. The Supervisor shall seek finalization of a cost sharing arrangement, if possible, to be applied toward the payment of the authorized textbook or material(s). Efforts to secure such an arrangement by the Supervisor, or failure to achieve such a cost sharing arrangement shall be documented in the case record of services.**

**Receipts verifying the provision of books and supplies must be submitted with the billing invoice for payments to be processed. Clients who choose to have authorizations provided directly to them must be informed by the Counselor of the need to provide receipts.]**

**(5) Supported Employment**

**\*Supported employment services refer to competitive integrated employment, including customized employment in an integrated work setting in which an individual with a most significant disability that includes visual impairment or legal blindness, including a youth with a most significant disability, is working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment that is individualized, and customized, consistent with the unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual, including with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities.**

**Supported employment services are available for individuals for whom competitive integrated employment has not historically occurred, or for whom competitive**

**integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability, and who, because of the nature and severity of their disabilities, need intensive supported employment services and extended services after the transition from support provided by the Bureau, in order to perform this work.**

**An individual with a most significant disability, whose supported employment in an integrated setting does not satisfy the criteria of competitive integrated employment**

 **is considered to be working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment so long as the individual can reasonably anticipate achieving competitive integrated employment within six months of achieving a supported employment outcome, or in limited circumstances, within a period not to exceed 12 months from the achievement of the supported employment outcome, if a longer period is necessary based on the needs of the individual, and the individual has demonstrated progress toward competitive earnings based on information contained in the service record. The six-month short-term basis period, and the additional six months that may be available in limited circumstances, begins after an individual has completed up to 24 months of supported employment services (unless a longer period of time is necessary based upon the individual’s needs) and the individual has achieved a supported employment outcome, meaning that the individual is stable in the supported employment placement for a minimum period of 90 days following the transition to extended services. At this point, the individual has achieved a supported employment outcome.**

**Supported employment services refers to ongoing**

**support services, including customized employment, and other appropriate services needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability that includes visual impairment or legal blindness, including a youth with a most significant disability, in supported employment that are organized and made available, singly or in combination, in such a way as to assist an eligible individual to achieve competitive integrated employment, and:**

**(A) Are based on a determination of the needs of an**

**eligible individual, as specified in an Individualized Plan**

**for Employment;**

**(B) Are provided by the Bureau for a period of time not to exceed 24 months, unless under special circumstances the eligible individual and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor jointly agree to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the Individualized Plan for Employment; and**

**(C) Following transition, as post-employment services that are unavailable from an extended services provider and that are necessary to maintain or regain the job placement or advance in employment.**

**Supported employment services are initiated once the individual is hired and has started to work at the actual job site for the employer. Title 6B Supported Employment funds can only be utilized for this specific service, or for extended services for youth with disabilities placed into supported employment. All other services as planned for and detailed in the IPE, including job placement services, can only be paid for using basic Vocational Rehabilitation Title I funds, state matching funds or program income funds. The most frequent type of supported employment service is job coaching, although on-site evaluators and similar services that provide direct support to the individual at the job site may also be considered for funding through the Title 6B funds.**

**Extended services refers to ongoing support services**

**and other appropriate services that are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability that includes visual impairment or legal blindness, including a youth with a most significant disability, in supported employment. Extended services can be made available singly or in combination, in such a way as to assist an eligible**

**individual in maintaining supported employment. The services are customized and based on the needs of the eligible individual, as specified in their Individualized Plan for Employment. Extended services may be provided by a State agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer, or any other appropriate resource, after an individual has made the transition from supported employment provided by the Bureau.**

**For a youth with a most significant disability that includes visual impairment or legal blindness, the Bureau may directly provide or fund extended services for a period not to exceed four years, or at such time that a youth reaches age 25, whichever occurs first.**

**The Bureau cannot provide extended services to an individual with a most significant disability who is not a youth with a most significant disability.\***

**[Policy**

**1. Supported Employment means:**

**(A) employment in an integrated, work setting typically found within a community, with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, where the individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled, and:**

**(i) for individuals whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted, or intermittent as a result of a significant disability; and**

**(ii) who, because of the nature and significance of their disabilities, need intensive supported employment services from the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and extended services after transition in order to perform this work; or**

**(B) transitional employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities due to mental illness.**

**2. Supported Employment Services means ongoing support services and other appropriate services needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment that are provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program:**

**(A) for a period of time not to exceed 18 months, unless under special circumstances the eligible individual and the Rehabilitation Counselor or coordinator jointly agree to extend the time in order to achieve the employment goal identified in the Individualized Plan for Employment; and**

**(B) following transition, as post-employment services that are unavailable from an extended-services provider and that are necessary to maintain or regain the job placement.**

**3. The IPE for individual with the most significant disabilities for whom a vocational goal in a supported employment setting has been determined to be appropriate and desired based on the informed choice of the individual or their authorized representative shall contain:**

**(A) a description of the supported employment services to be provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program; and**

**(B) a description of the extended services needed, and identification of the source of extended services or, in the event that identification of the source is not possible at the time the IPE is developed, a statement explaining the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that services shall become available;**

**(C) a description of the number of hours of work to be performed weekly.**

**Refer to other definitions at the end of this section which relate to supported employment services.**

**Procedures**

**Supported employment is work in an integrated community based actual employer setting for individuals with the most significant disabilities who need ongoing support services to perform that work. Supported employment options must be considered with every client before a decision is made to recommend or refer the client into extended, sheltered employment or close the case due to the significance of the disability.**

**Requirements**

**1. The Counselor and client must determine whether the client is in need of and can benefit from supported employment. This option must be considered before a decision is made that a client’s disability is too significant to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services. In order to be eligible for services leading to a supported employment placement, under either Title I (regular case service) or Title VI-B (supported employment) funds, the following criteria must be met:**

**a. The client must meet the VR eligibility criteria. An individual determined to be potentially employable through the provision of supported employment services should be found eligible for the vocational rehabilitation program, even if the resource(s) needed to provide those services is currently unavailable. The availability of extended services is NOT a factor in determining eligibility.**

**b. The client must be an individual for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred or has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of the disability (e.g., who have either no history of competitive employment or an intermittent work history of competitive employment).**

**c. The client must require ongoing support services in order to maintain employment. There must be documentation that the person needs ongoing supports in order to perform competitive work.**

**d. A comprehensive assessment of vocational rehabilitation needs of the individual results in a finding that supported employment is the appropriate rehabilitation objective of the individual.**

**To be considered for supported employment, the program must meet the following requirements:**

**a. The client must work in an integrated work setting (see definition of "integrated work setting" at the end of this section).**

**b. The client is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.**

**c. Ongoing support services are needed and provided in order for the individual to maintain employment (see definition of "ongoing support services" at the end of this section).**

**d. The time-limited supported employment services provided by VR are for a period not to exceed 18 months. Exception can be made only when:**

**1) additional time is needed by the individual to stabilize on the job;**

**2) additional services are needed through VR;**

**3) the Counselor and client agree to this extension; and**

**4) this need is identified in the IPE.**

**2. An IPE with a vocational goal of supported employment must contain the following:**

**a. The goal for the number of hours of work per week to be achieved by the time of transition to extended services. This must be set so as to maximize the individual's vocational potential. There must also be a provision in the IPE for specific monitoring to determine if the client is achieving this goal.**

**b. The nature and extent of the time-limited services.**

**c. The extent of ongoing support, i.e., the number of site visits per month, must also be included in the IPE. The provider of ongoing support (third party provider) must make a minimum of two employer site visits per month, except in situations where off-site monitoring is more appropriate and desired by the individual. If off-site visits are to occur, they must be done at least twice monthly with the employee and once per month with the employer. This must also be specified as a service in the IPE.**

**d. The source for extended services. A written commitment for extended services must be obtained prior to the provision of supported employment services under either Title I (regular funds) or Title VI-B (supported employment funds). This commitment must be detailed on the "Documentation for Supported Employment" form (BESB 190), with signatures of the provider of long-term support obtained.**

**3. The process of locating extended support services must begin as soon as possible with referral to DMR, DMH, or other appropriate resources. Extended support may be considered from any resource that can reasonably be expected to provide the services needed by the individual to maintain employment.**

**4. During the course of the IPE, the Counselor must periodically review the time-limited supported employment services provided to the client by VR. This is to determine whether the services should be continued, modified, or discontinued.**

**5. A supplemental evaluation to determine the client's potential to benefit from supported employment can be initiated AFTER a determination of eligibility has been made. Please note that Title VI, Part B funds CANNOT be used to determine an individual's eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services. A client must be in Status 10 for Title VI, Part B funds to be used for a supplemental evaluation.**

**6. The restriction on 18 months of maximum vocational rehabilitation sponsorship has been amended to allow for an extension if it is needed for the supported employee to achieve job stability. The eighteen month guideline represents 18 months that are spent in actual employment. Periods of intermittent unemployment between placements do not count toward the 18 month time period.**

**7. Title VI, Part B monies can be used to fund:**

**a. supplemental evaluations after a determination of eligibility;**

**b. job development and job placement; and**

**c. the provision of time limited services to support the individual in employment. The full scope of VR services available to clients through Title I funds are also available, as necessary and appropriate, for clients receiving services through Title VI, Part B funds. Title VI, Part B funds are intended to supplement and not supplant Title I funds. If funding is not available through Title VI, Part B, then Title I funds shall be used for the provision of supported employment services.**

**8. An integrated work setting remains as a requirement for supported employment and has been defined as a work site where most coworkers are not disabled or there are interactions with the general public if the client works alone or with other persons with disabilities. The setting is not considered integrated if the primary interactions with non-disabled persons are people who are paid providers of services to the client. The employment setting must be consistent with those typically found within the community. In enclave situations, the client must be fully integrated into the workforce of the company to the same extent as nondisabled coworkers and be performing the scope of actual job duties of the position for which they have been hired.**

**9. In order for the vocational rehabilitation program to transition the client to the extended service provider, the individual must be stabilized in their placement; they must have substantially met the hourly goal as written in the IPE, and the extended services must be immediately available. If the individual does not meet the hourly goal as specified in the IPE, but both the client and Counselor agree that the job represents "substantial and suitable employment" then an IPE Amendment will be developed to note the actual hours achieved. The client must maintain employment for at least 90 days after the transition to extended services before the case can be closed in Status 26. Supported employment outcomes require the client to have achieved at least the minimum commensurate wage for the job by the time of case closure or to have achieved the highest level of earnings commensurate with their skills and abilities. In all situations, the employment must be in an integrated setting that is typically found in the community. The client, or their authorized representative, through informed choice, must participate in and agree to the decision to inactivate their case.**

**10. Post-employment services are allowable in certain situations and should be indicated in the IPE. These services are primarily for equipment maintenance, rehabilitation technology services, and adaptive devices. Post-employment services should not be used for extensive training and should only cover those services not provided by the extended service provider.**

**Information**

**Title VI-B funds can be used only for:**

**1) evaluations for the purpose of assessing a client's potential for supported employment which is needed after eligibility determination. Examples may include evaluations to determine the most suitable supported employment placement, reassessment of suitability of a placement, or where there is a change in the individual's medical condition;**

**2) time-limited services which are needed for an individual, to achieve and maintain job stability; and**

**3) discrete post-employment services following transition to the source of extended support services which are unavailable from the extended service provider(s) and are necessary to maintain the job placement. Examples of discrete services include job station redesign, repair and maintenance of assistive technology, and replacement of prosthetic and orthotic devices.**

**The Counselor and client should choose a provider on the basis of the quality of service, expertise with the individual's disability, the level of integration, the amount of choice in employment options offered, ability to offer services needed, and availability of ongoing support.**

**A Counselor may find that a client who is currently receiving extended support (through DMR, DMH, natural supports, etc.) in either supported or sheltered employment has demonstrated skills to be able to work in an individual placement and is capable of functioning in a less restrictive environment. In such cases, VR's supported employment services may be considered. In addition, an individual who has lost his or her job may reapply for services. In these instances, the case should be reopened (rather than use of post-employment services) and a new period of time-limited services should begin. However, the previous source of extended support services must first be considered as a comparable benefit.**

**Definitions**

**Ongoing Support means services that are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability, in supported employment. These must include, at a minimum, twice-monthly monitoring at the work site of each individual to assess employment stability (unless the IPE provides for off-site monitoring) and based on that assessment, the coordination or provision of specific services at or away from the work site that are needed to maintain employment stability. If off-site monitoring is determined to be appropriate and desired by the client, it must, at minimum, consist of two meetings with the individual and one meeting with the employer per month.**

**The term "ongoing support services" includes services from time of placement and throughout the term of employment. It encompasses all time-limited services provided by VR until transition to extended services, unless post-employment services are provided following transition, and the extended services provided by another source of support.**

**Time-limited Services means that portion of the services which are provided by VR. This period usually begins at the time of placement and generally cannot exceed 18 months. The 18 months are based on the time the individual spends in employment. For example, if the individual has an extensive hospitalization and then returns to the job, the time which the individual was hospitalized would not be considered part of the 18 months. Time-limited services may exceed 18 months only in cases where: 1) a longer period to achieve job stabilization has been established in the IPE and 2) a longer period is needed In order to successfully transition to ongoing support service. Time-limited services also include discrete post-employment services following transition to extended services.**

**Extended Services means ongoing support services and other appropriate services that are needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment and that are provided by a state agency, a private non-profit organization, employer, or any other appropriate resource, from funds other than VR funds, after an individual with a most significant disability has made the transition from support provided by VR.**

**Integrated Work Settings means job-sites in which clients interact with non-disabled individuals other than the non-disabled individuals who are providing services to those clients to the same extent that non-disabled individuals in comparable positions interact with other persons. Please note that the interaction required may not be satisfied by contact between the client and individuals who are providing ongoing support services at the job-site. The level of integration must be consistent with job sites typically found within the community.**

**Transitional Employment, as used in the definition of "supported employment", means a series of temporary job placements in competitive work in integrated settings with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities due to mental illness. In transitional employment, the provision of ongoing support services must include continuing sequential job placements until job permanency is achieved.]**

**(6) Transition Services [(School-to-Work)]**

**[Policy]**

**Transition Services [is] \*are\* a coordinated set of activities for [a student] \*students and youth with disabilities that facilitate the transition from school to post-secondary life, such as achievement of an employment outcome in competitive integrated employment, or Pre-Employment Transition Services for students.\*[, designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.] The coordinated set of activities must be based upon the \*individual's\* [individual student's] needs, taking into account the student's \*or youth’s\* preferences and interests, and must include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational skills. Transition services must promote or facilitate the accomplishment of the employment goal consistent with the student's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) \*and includes outreach to and engagement of the parents, or, as appropriate the representative of the student or youth with a disability.**

**For the purposes of this section:**

**Youth with a disability means an individual with a disability that includes legal blindness or visual impairment, who is not younger than 14 years of age and not older than 24 years of age.**

**Student with a disability means, in general, an individual with a disability that includes legal blindness or visual impairment, in a secondary, post-secondary or other recognized education program who is not younger than age 16 (unless a younger age for Pre-employment Transition Service is identified in the IEP of the individual by the Planning and Placement Team), and not older than 21 years of age and is eligible for, and receiving, special education or related services under IDEA or section 504.**

**While transition services may include services that are similar to Pre-Employment Transition Services for students, transition services in general include a broader range of the full scope of vocational rehabilitation services under an IPE that contribute to the achievement of the employment outcome of the individual.**

**Pre-Employment Transition Services may be included in the IPE for students and funded through the reserved federal funds for the delivery of these services.\***

**[The Vocational Rehabilitation Program will:**

**1. Identify potential vocational rehabilitation clients within the Children's Services Program of BESB.**

**2. Encourage VR Counselors to serve as consultants on employment matters, as their schedules permit, by attending PPT meetings when invited by the local school districts.]**

**When a student is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, his or her Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) will be prepared in coordination with the local education agency's (LEA) Individual Education \*Program\* [Plan] (IEP). Every effort will be made to assure that the IPE and the IEP complement one another and work toward the same objectives for the student. \*Vocational Rehabilitation Program funds shall not be used in place of funding for services and equipment for the client that are the responsibility of the Local Education Agency to provide.\***

**[An IEP is a written statement which includes educational goals, instructional objectives, specific educational and transitional services, and provision for an annual progress review for a student with a disability. The IEP is developed by a team which includes a representative of the local educational agency, who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially designated instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities, the teacher, the parents or student's representative, and, whenever appropriate, the student.]**

**The IPE for a student with a disability who is receiving special education services shall be coordinated with the individualized education program (IEP) for that individual [in terms of the goals, objectives, and services identified in the IEP].**

**Students \*and youth who have applied and been found eligible for vocational rehabilitation services\* will have an IPE \*developed within 90 days of the date of eligibility determination unless the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the eligible individual agree to the extension of that deadline to a specific date by which the Individualized Plan for Employment must be completed\* [in effect prior to the time of graduation from high school of special education schooling.**

**Procedures**

**(i) IPE**

**Upon finding a student eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, the Counselor will initiate the process of participating in PPTs for the purpose of emphasizing vocational exploration, work assessments, job shadowing in actual employment settings, and summer work experience programs. Comparable benefits available through the school system will be used to the greatest extent possible for these evaluations. However, in the absence of comparable benefits, the Counselor may authorize the use of VR funds for assessments that assist in the identification of an employment goal, and the services necessary to achieve that goal.**

**An IPE should be developed upon identification of a suitable employment goal that is consistent with the unique interests, aptitudes, strengths, priorities, resources, and informed choice of the student. The IPE will include those services provided by special education and any other vocational rehabilitation services, as appropriate. The services provided by special education should be considered training and reflected by the use of Status 18.**

**Prior to utilizing Vocational Rehabilitation Program funding for adaptive technology, efforts must be made to ensure that adaptive equipment needed by high school students is identified each year at the student’s Planning and Placement Team. Adaptive equipment recommended should be included in the students’ Individualized Education Plan for purchase through the school system. If the school cannot fund the recommended technology, written documentation from the Local Education Agency or School District, which may include but will not be limited to a technology assessment, must be provided.**

**Equipment provided to a client through the Children’s Services Program of the Bureau for educational purposes shall also be considered available for vocational rehabilitation purposes, unless the equipment is determined to be insufficient to meet the vocational rehabilitation needs of the client, as determined by a rehabilitation technologist.**

**Information**

**In Connecticut, all special education students are required to have an IEP developed by age fifteen (15) and reviewed annually thereafter. The LEA is responsible for the IEP, however, VR input could provide key information in formulating the IEP. The IEP is valuable to VR and adult service providers in planning beyond public education years.**

**Vocational rehabilitation services may also be provided to students in public education who are not in special education, if the student meets vocational rehabilitation eligibility requirements. Referral and plan development for such students is no different than that for any vocational rehabilitation client.**

**VR may purchase services that are not the primary responsibility of the school that are necessary to determine eligibility or are an integral part of the IPE. Examples of such services provided are:**

**a. Vocational evaluation for VR eligibility**

**b. Vocational and career counseling**

**c. Prosthetics, aids/devices (individually owned)**

**d. Vocational evaluation for VR planning purposes**

**e. Occupational tools and equipment (individually owned)**

**f. Rehabilitation technology services**

**g. Physical or mental restoration services which are not available through special education.**

**(7) Transitional Employment**

**Policy**

**There are two different types of Transitional Employment:**

**A) Transitional employment is time-limited job-site training and/or assistance in a competitive integrated setting, required by an individual to obtain and adapt to employment. Clients may receive assistance with areas such as adjustment to the workplace environment, production expectations, co-worker expectations and attitudes, industry rules and regulations, and individual skill levels necessary to accomplish the job. Transitional employment should be given priority over traditional facility-based work adjustment programs, whenever feasible.**

**B) Transitional employment, when used specifically in relation to a supported employment placement, means a series of temporary job placements in competitive work in integrated settings with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities due to mental illness. In transitional employment, the provision of ongoing support services must include continuing sequential job placements until job permanency is achieved. Refer to the section of this manual titled "Supported Employment" for the specific procedures pertaining to this use of transitional employment.**

**Procedures**

**1. The Counselor and client must make a determination whether transitional employment is the most appropriate option to meet the client's needs, based on past work history, transferable skills, a situational assessment, or other evaluative data.**

**2. The selection of an appropriate provider for the provision of transitional employment services will be a mutually agreed upon decision by the client and Counselor. Factors to be considered will be the provider's experience, the client's specific needs, and client-provider compatibility.**

**3. The Counselor will assist the provider, when appropriate, in the development of the placement and maintain contact with all concerned parties.**

**4. Goals and objectives should be stated to achieve specific client outcomes. Periods for evaluations of the client's progress should be set to determine effectiveness of the transitional employment services. All parties, especially the client, must have a clear understanding of individual responsibilities and expected outcomes.**

**5. The Counselor, service provider, employer, and client will determine the initial length of transitional employment services. The Counselor may approve an extension after a careful review and supervisory approval.**

**6. The Counselor will require monthly reports by the provider agency. The transitional employment should be continued until such time as there is mutual agreement by the employer, client, and Counselor that the goals have been met or that an ineffective program must be terminated.**

**Information**

**Transitional employment is similar to supported employment except that ongoing support services will not be necessary for the individual to maintain his or her employment. In transitional employment, support services are generally of shorter duration than those for supported employment.]**

**\*(7)\* [(8)] Work Adjustment**

**[Policy]**

**Work adjustment training may be provided to clients who need assistance in developing those skills which are generally required in any employment setting. This may include development of social skills, appropriate work behaviors, work speed, stamina, adherence to work rules, and other employer expectations (e.g., attendance, punctuality, proper hygiene, etc.). Work adjustment \*training should, to the greatest extent feasible, be provided in integrated\* [may be provided in] community-based sites [(supported employment, transitional employment training, or through the natural employer/employee relationship) or in a traditional community-based program's facility setting. Work adjustment training should be provided in an integrated setting in the community to the maximum extent feasible].**

**Prior to making a determination that an out of state Work Adjustment training program is necessary for the achievement of the \*employment outcome\* [vocational goal] as identified in the Individualized Plan for Employment, the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor and client shall review options available through in-state community rehabilitation providers. In situations where no feasible in-state training option exists to address the client’s \*employment outcome\* [vocational goal], as supported by \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor documentation in the case record of services for the individual, preference shall be given to the most effective, least expensive out of state training program that is consistent with the individuals informed choice of comparable providers.**

**[Procedures**

**1. If the client and Counselor determine that the client has not developed sufficient work-related skills necessary to succeed in employment and work adjustment training will be necessary, they should first consider whether these skills can be developed solely on-the-job through the natural employer/employee relationship. If this is not feasible, the Counselor and client should investigate the provision of other forms of on-site work adjustment, such as transitional or supported employment services. Because community-based work adjustment training has the greatest likelihood of success, work adjustment training in a community rehabilitation facility should be provided only after all other options have been thoroughly exhausted and the client has made an informed choice of this alternative.**

**2. The Counselor, client, and service provider must determine the specific behaviors or skills which will be addressed in the work adjustment program. Goals, responsibilities, and time lines should be clearly identified by all parties and measurable standards should be established. This information must be reflected in the IPE.**

**3. The client, Counselor, and service provider will determine the initial length of work adjustment services. The Counselor may authorize an extension after careful review and supervisory approval.**

**4. The Counselor will require the provider to submit monthly progress reports.**

**Information**

**Because many people have difficulty developing adequate work skills and behaviors in a simulated work environment, training in a real work setting is always preferable to that which takes place in a sheltered workshop. In addition, many individuals have difficulty transferring skills from one site to another, thus making it necessary to repeat training if a community rehabilitation facility. When a community rehabilitation facility is selected for a work adjustment training site, it is important to establish measurable goals leading toward employment in the least restrictive environment, and to regularly assess progress toward those goals.]**

**\*e)\* [(d)] Other Goods and Services**

**(1) Adaptive Equipment, Telecommunications,**

**Sensory and Technological Aids/Devices**

**[Policy]**

**Throughout the vocational rehabilitation process, the client may be in need, due to limitations from their disability or disabilities of adaptive equipment, software, and/or daily living aids based on his or her Individualized Plan for Employment.**

**Daily living aids may be obtained based on the direct vocational needs assessment of the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor. Adaptive Technology devices require the specific recommendation of a Rehabilitation Technologist, low vision specialist or qualified \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor \*(as designated by the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor)\*. Clients will participate in [a vocational needs] \*an\* assessment in order to determine through informed choice the most effective, least expensive adaptive technology consistent with the IPE. The most effective, least expensive technology will be provided to the client as determined by \*this\* [a needs] assessment documented by the Rehabilitation Technologist, Low Vision Specialist, or \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor. The more expensive adaptive technology will be provided to the client only if the [needs] assessment documents that less expensive adaptive technology is not suitable.**

**In providing adaptive equipment in employment situations, the Bureau will first explore the responsibilities of the employer to provide reasonable accommodations, as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. \*However, such considerations shall not serve as a basis for the Bureau to deny the purchase of necessary adaptive technology devices for a client to perform job functions in situations where the client has chosen to not disclose their disability to the employer, or in situations where the employer is unable to obtain the necessary devices in a timeframe sufficient to enable the client to obtain or retain an immediate employment opportunity.\* Employers are expected to provide computers, printers, and business equipment that is otherwise available to employees of the company who perform similar work tasks. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] Program will only consider providing computers and peripherals when it can be clearly documented that such devices are necessary due to the nature of the disability, and that persons who perform similar job functions within the company do not use computers for the performance of their job duties.**

**All equipment provided during the course of the rehabilitation process shall be owned and maintained by the client. The cost of maintenance or repair of the equipment shall rest with the client. In circumstances where a client requests, the Bureau shall reimburse the client for the documented cost of the repair and applicable shipping of said equipment to and from the repair location.**

**Upgrades to adaptive technology after successful case inactivation shall only be done under the provisions of post-employment services or through a new eligibility determination with an Individualized Plan for Employment, or subsequent Amendment, when deemed essential for vocational rehabilitation purposes.**

**Adaptations to homes or motor vehicles will be done \*only\* when \*specific\* [directly related] to the disability of the client and when the adaptation is essential for the client’s participation in vocational rehabilitation services consistent with the IPE. Adaptive modifications shall only be made to residences or motor vehicles that are owned, co-owned, or are under a multiple year lease or rental contract by the client or a family member. Alternative arrangements shall first be explored, such as the use of livery services to provide transportation to short-term training. All comparable benefits and resources shall be used before Bureau funding will be considered.**

**All equipment purchases are to be made in accordance with existing State of Connecticut purchasing regulations, policies, and requirements.**

**[Procedures**

**The client and Counselor will work together to determine whether adaptive equipment is necessary in order to participate in training or employment. The Counselor will review the policies for the provision of equipment with the client so that he/she has a clear understanding of the process.**

**The Counselor will make a referral to a Rehabilitation Technologist or low vision provider to assess the most appropriate devices for the situation. The Counselor (and where appropriate the Rehabilitation Technologist) will discuss equipment needs with the employer in order to obtain reasonable accommodations to the greatest extent possible. The Counselor will document these activities in the case record of services.**

**The appropriate report from the Rehabilitation Technologist, low vision provider or qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will be present in the case record of services prior to submitting authorization requests for all computerized equipment, hardware and software, adaptive devices, and CCTVs. This report is essential for the authorization to be approved.**

**All purchases are to be made in accordance with State of Connecticut purchasing regulations, policies, and procedures. If an item being recommended cannot be obtained from a contracted vendor of the State, then competitive bidding may be required before an authorization request can be made. The Counselor should consult with the Business Office prior to submitting purchasing requests if an item cannot be found on a current, approved vendor catalog.**

**If a client is found to need adaptations for a motor vehicle in order to participate in vocational rehabilitation services directly related to the Individualized Plan for Employment, the Counselor will verify that the client is the owner, multi-year lease holder, or co-owner of the vehicle, or that the vehicle is under the ownership or multi-year lease to a family member. The client will verify that he or she has stable arrangements for a driver of the vehicle, and that the employment, vocational evaluation or training situation is considered permanent or long-term. In situations where employment is temporary, or specialized transportation is needed for participation in a short-term training program, the Counselor must explore alternative transportation options, such as public transportation where wheelchair equipped buses are available, or the use of specialized livery services for persons with mobility impediments. No vehicle modifications will be made to the driver's location within the vehicle as persons who are legally blind do not hold valid drivers licenses in this state. Full consideration of comparable benefits, such as private insurance and independent living funds shall be explored prior to using VR funding.**

**Adaptation to a home will only be considered when it can be documented that such modifications are essential for the client to participate in vocational rehabilitation services consistent with the IPE. The home will need to be owned, co-owned or under a multiyear lease to the client or a family member. In such situations, full consideration of comparable benefits, such as private insurance and independent living funds shall be explored prior to using VR funding. An example of a modification might be providing a ramp to enable a client who uses a wheelchair to exit their home in order to attend a training program.]**

**(2) Rehabilitation Technology Services**

**[Policy]**

**Rehabilitation technology [(formerly rehabilitation engineering)] means the systematic application of technologies, engineering methodologies, or scientific principles to meet the needs of, and address the barriers confronted by clients of the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] Program in the areas \*that include\* [of] education, training, vocational rehabilitation, employment, transportation relative to vocational rehabilitation services, and independent living as related to vocational rehabilitation services. Rehabilitation technology \*services should be considered for clients participating in trial work experiences to facilitate access to job tasks, as well as during the process of career exploration and identification of the employment outcome for the IPE\* [must be considered for all applicants or clients as a means to enhance the assessment of rehabilitation potential, IPE development, placement, and job accommodations]. \*The term rehabilitation technology includes rehabilitation engineering, assistive technology devices, and assistive technology services.**

**Rehabilitation technology services may be obtained from Rehabilitation Teachers/Technologists and qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (as designated by the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor) employed by the Bureau or through fee for service low vision providers or adaptive technology specialists that are authorized through State contract or purchase of service authority to provide such services, either directly, or through a third party. Vendors of adaptive technology products cannot be utilized for purposes of performing client assessments to identify adaptive devices and services needed by the client.**

**The informed choice of the client shall be included in the rehabilitation technology assessment report. In situations where the recommendations of the evaluator and the client are in disagreement, the evaluator shall indicate the reason(s) for making an alternative recommendation.\***

**[Procedures**

**The following guidelines should be used in the determination of the need for Rehabilitation Technology services:**

**1. The Counselor must consider the applicant's/client's need for and the provision of assistive technology services as part of every eligibility determination and IPE, including post-employment services. When rehabilitation technology may benefit the applicant/client in determining eligibility, planning for a vocational goal, training or employment, a rehabilitation technology consultation must be considered.**

**2. In many instances, simple "low tech" generic devices can meet the client's needs and can be substantiated by the Counselor and client without a rehabilitation technology consultation. Inexpensive devices such as daily living aids, tape recorders, telephone head sets, and simple work site modifications (e.g., low vision lamps, adjustments to furniture height, telephone amplification, etc.) are some examples.**

**3.] Rehabilitation technology services are exempt from the requirement to use comparable services and benefits. However, Counselors are encouraged to use other resources, if such services or benefits are available.**

**4. The Counselor should make every effort to ensure that the client understands and accepts the need for adaptive equipment. The client should be an active participant in the evaluation process and be given a copy of the Technologist's evaluation report if desired.**

**5. For optimal benefit in the use of the equipment, the Counselor and client must determine the need for training and make necessary arrangements. This determination must be made on an individual case basis by the client or family member, Counselor, Rehabilitation Technologist, training institution, and/or other appropriate resources.**

**6. The Counselor must establish that the Rehabilitation Technologist's recommendations are directly relevant to the client's vocational rehabilitation program prior to authorizing the purchase of adaptive equipment.**

**7. In order to fully benefit from the provision of rehabilitation technology services, the Counselor and client should consider participation in low vision services prior to involving rehabilitation technology in situations where functional vision may be enhanced with prescription magnifiers.**

**8. The Counselor shall complete a Client Profile (see form) for all referrals to a Rehabilitation Technologist. This form provides basic information that is necessary for the Technologist to begin the evaluation process. A copy of this completed form shall be filed in section 3 of the case record of services.**

**BUREAU OF EDUCATION AND SERVICES FOR THE BLIND**

**CLIENT PROFILE**

**TECHNOLOGIST\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_COUNSELOR\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**DATE\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**NAME PHONE**

**ADDRESS**

**VOCATIONAL GOAL OR JOB TITLE:**

**VISUAL CAPABILITIES:**

**PHYSICAL/ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

**SKILLS/TRAINING:**

**ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT CONSIDERATIONS:**

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ABOUT CLIENT:**

**SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR TECHNOLOGIST TO ANSWER:]**

**(3) Interpreter Services for \*Individuals who are Deafblind\* [the Deaf]**

**[Policy]**

**Interpreter services [for the deaf] will be provided as needed to assist \*an individual who is deafblind or deaf and visually impaired\* [the deaf-blind individual] with their vocational rehabilitation program. This may occur at the time of intake, establishing eligibility, and, in general, throughout the vocational rehabilitation process. \*Interpreter services are available on a fee for service basis through vendors contracted for the provision of such services.\* [The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program at the Department of Rehabilitation Services offers this service at a specified fee.**

**Procedure**

**Counselors will consider the use of interpreter services at any point throughout the VR process when it is found to be necessary and desired by the client to ensure that persons with significant hearing loss can fully participate in all aspects of the program.**

**[Interpreters can be obtained by contacting:**

**State Department of Rehabilitation Services**

**Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program**

**67 Prospect Avenue, 3rd Floor**

**Hartford, CT 06106**

**Phone Numbers: (800) 708-6796 TTY/Voice**

 **(860) 231-8756 TTY/Voice GENERAL NUMBER**

 **(860) 231-8169 TTY ONLY**

 **(860) 231-1690 TTY/Voice**

**INTERPRETING DEPARTMENT**

**(860) 231-7623 TTY/Voice**

**INTERPRETING EMERGENCY**

**Telephone: 566-7414, 1-800-708-6796]**

**When interpreter services are found to be necessary for participation at an institution of higher education, the Counselor will first explore the availability of funding for this service through the school or university, as covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The student will be responsible for meeting with the educational institution's Disability Coordinator to identify the need for this service. BESB will participate in a co-sharing of funding for the number of hours of interpreter service necessary for participation in the training program.**

**Since interpreter services can be provided during any phase of the rehabilitation process, an IPE is not necessary for the authorization of this service. However, upon the selection of a vocational goal and the subsequent development of an IPE, interpreter services shall be included within the plan if the service will be provided in conjunction with other services detailed in the IPE.]**

**(4) Low Vision Services**

**[Policy]**

**Low vision services include specialized evaluations by trained professionals to determine the devices, both prescription and nonprescription, that will maximize the remaining functional vision of a person with significant visual loss. Low vision services also include the provision of these aids and devices and training in how to use them. Low vision services can be provided by ophthalmologists and optometrists certified by the Bureau to provide these services. In addition, non-prescriptive devices can be provided by \*Rehabilitation Teachers employed by the Bureau\* [low vision consultants who have been identified by the Agency as qualified to make such recommendations].**

**Wherever practical, low vision services should be provided as the first option for maximizing functional vision before more extensive high technology solutions are considered.**

**\*Clients shall be provided with a listing of approved low vision doctors in order to make an informed decision as to which provider to choose. In making the referral to a low vision doctor, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor should include information regarding any other medical insurance the client has, so that maximum utilization of comparable benefits can be considered prior to the use of Bureau funding.\***

**All low vision services will be provided in accordance with approved fee schedules \*or actual catalog prices for items where no fee schedule price exists. The Bureau cannot reimburse clients or practitioners for aids that were dispensed without the prior authorization of the Bureau.**

**In situations where a client is experiencing deteriorating vision over a period of time, low vision services may be necessary at more than one point throughout the Vocational Rehabilitation process. In determining the need for additional low vision services, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor should consider the nature of the eye condition and the time that has elapsed since the last evaluation. If a different low vision provider is selected for subsequent evaluations, information on the aids and magnifiers previously dispensed to the client through other practitioners should be included in the referral.**

**Should it be found through the low vision examination by a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist that the client is no longer legally blind or has a significant visual impairment that constitutes an impediment to employment, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will need to reassess if the client continues to meet the eligibility criteria to receive vocational rehabilitation services. Where it is determined that the client is no longer eligible for services as a result of regained vision, all policy requirements for making such a determination shall apply. The client will be provided with information on the Client Assistance Program and the appeals options.**

**The provision of low vision aids that enable a client's vision to be corrected to a point where legal blindness is no longer present shall be considered as a physical restoration service under the terms of the IPE.\***

**[Procedures**

**1. When a Counselor and client conclude that low vision services are necessary to determine whether existing vision can be enhanced, the Counselor will obtain a signed release of information from the client identifying the low vision provider.**

**2. The client will exercise informed choice as to the desired provider from the most recent list of BESB approved low vision consultants.**

**3. A Form BESB 124 (Final Eye Report Form) should be used by the low vision consultant, and a copy sent to the original ophthalmologist when appropriate. It is required that all Bureau consultants submit a thorough final report in writing on the client.**

**4. After meeting with the client, the Counselor should complete all pertinent information on the BESB 45 (Referral for Low Vision Evaluation). This, along with other referral materials, and an authorization allowing only for visits 1 and 2 of the Bureau Fee Schedule (Low Vision Evaluation & Report and Case Workup, Prescribing), should then be sent to the low vision consultant.**

**5. When referring clients for low vision evaluations under Medicare, the Counselor must enclose a copy of the eye report from the client's case file for the low vision doctor to receive payment from Medicare. It is also necessary to indicate on the low vision referral form that the ophthalmologist who sent the original eye report declaring the client legally blind will need a copy of the low vision evaluation. A release of information must be obtained from the client prior to releasing the eye report to the low vision provider. The Counselor may cover any unpaid balance after Medicare benefits are applied. The total cost for the low vision evaluation including any portion covered through Medicare cannot exceed the BESB fee schedule rate.**

**6. After the consultant has returned to the referring counselor a full, written evaluation of the client, which includes a list of suggested low vision equipment complete with pricing at laboratory fees, the Counselor will evaluate the low vision consultant's recommendations and forward to the BESB low vision consulting doctor the list of devices being requested. The BESB low vision consultant will compare the items against the existing fee schedule and approve the request by initialing and dating the forms.**

**7. Only items approved by the BESB low vision doctor can be authorized by the Counselor for purchase. All fee schedule prices will apply. If a low vision provider disagrees with a determination of the BESB low vision doctor, the matter is to be resolved at their level.**

**8. An authorization to cover a dispensing and training visit, progress evaluation, and prescription service may also be forwarded to the low vision consultant if aids are being authorized, and this service has been approved by the BESB low vision doctor.**

**9. If the final eye report from the low vision consultant indicates a possible change of visual status (i.e., legally blind to visually impaired), it is imperative that the report be submitted to the BESB low vision consulting doctor for review.**

**10. All low vision services must be pre-authorized. The Counselor is not permitted to reimburse clients or practitioners for aids that were dispensed without the prior knowledge and approval of the Bureau.**

**11. In situations where a client is experiencing deteriorating vision over a period of time, low vision services may be necessary at more than one point throughout the VR process. In determining the need of additional low vision services, the Counselor should consider the nature of the eye condition and the time that has elapsed since the last evaluation. If a different low vision provider is selected for subsequent evaluations, the Counselor must take care to ensure that duplicate requests for visual aids are not processed. It is important to provide the new low vision provider with information related to aids and magnifiers previously provided to the client through other practitioners. As a guideline, low vision evaluations should not be necessary more than once every two years. In situations where a client is requesting this service more frequently, the BESB consulting low vision eye doctor should be consulted to review the nature of the eye condition and assist the Counselor in reaching a determination as to the potential of benefit from additional evaluations.]**

**(5) Maintenance**

**[Policy]**

**Maintenance means monetary support provided to \*an individual for expenses, such as food, shelter, and clothing, that are in excess of the normal expenses of the individual and that are necessitated by the individual's participation in an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs or the individual's receipt of vocational rehabilitation services under an Individualized Plan for Employment\* [an eligible individual or an individual participating in a trial work or extended evaluation period for those basic living expenses such as food, shelter, clothing, health maintenance, and other subsistence expenses that are in excess of the normal living expenses of the individual, and that are necessitated by the individual's participation in a program of vocational rehabilitation services].**

**\*Maintenance includes, but is not limited to, services and items such as the cost of a uniform or other suitable clothing that is required for an individual's job placement or job-seeking activities, the cost of short-term shelter that is required in order for an individual to participate in assessment activities or vocational training at a site that is not within commuting distance of an individual's home, or the initial one-time costs, such as a security deposit or charges for the initiation of utilities, that are required in order for an individual to relocate for a job placement.\***

**[Maintenance may be provided to an individual at any time during a trial work or extended evaluation period or a vocational rehabilitation plan for that individual is in effect. Maintenance services may also be used to enable a client to participate in evaluations to determine rehabilitation needs, prior to the development of an IPE. BESB Vocational Rehabilitation participation in payments for maintenance is available only to enable an individual to derive the full benefit of other vocational rehabilitation services being provided.] Maintenance is not intended to cover the cost of a client's primary residence, which must be maintained regardless of whether the individual is participating in a vocational rehabilitation program.**

**When provided in relation to participation in a program of study at an institution of higher education, maintenance services such as room and board will be subject to the unmet need of the individual and the policies as stated in [Chapter 3, Section 10, Subsection C (4) of] this manual \*under\* "Post-Secondary Training" [shall apply].**

**Maintenance after employment has started may be paid to eligible clients who must relocate to a new residence in order to work, but not for a period beyond the date of receipt of the second paycheck or for more than one month after start of employment, whichever comes first. For clients placed in self-employment, a maintenance allowance may be paid for a period not exceeding thirty (30) days if it can be demonstrated that such costs are above and beyond the normal costs associated with maintaining the primary residence of the individual.**

**Maintenance will be provided during post-employment services only when needed to support other rehabilitation services being provided to maintain employment for the client.**

**[Procedures**

**Maintenance is a supportive vocational rehabilitation service, limited in duration, provided at any time during the vocational rehabilitation process from application through post-employment. Maintenance payments may be provided only in support of another vocational rehabilitation service. The service is designed to help cover the increased costs of a client's basic living expenses such as food, shelter, clothing and other subsistence expenses which are necessary to support and derive the full benefit of other vocational rehabilitation services being provided.] Maintenance can be provided through direct payment to a service provider (e.g. room and board at a college) or through direct cash payments to the client. The mechanism used for cash payments for maintenance can also be employed in some cases for other services where authorization to a vendor is not practicable. Instances when this may be used include, but are not limited to, payments for rent to a client living in off-campus housing while attending a college or university. The Bureau will require receipts of rent payments for expenditure of funds provided directly to clients.**

**[Requirements**

**1. The Counselor and client must determine whether maintenance services are needed and whether they are supportive of another vocational rehabilitation service specified in the IPE or for extraordinary expenses incurred during the diagnostic process. Maintenance payments shall be made only to offset the increased cost of subsistence attributable to the client's participation in the vocational rehabilitation program.**

**2.] The availability of benefits or resources to a client through comparable benefits and financial aid awards must be taken into consideration prior to committing \*Vocational Rehabilitation Program\* [VR] funds for maintenance payments. Vocational Rehabilitation funds cannot be used to replace the family contribution portion of financial aid for students participating in higher education training.**

**[3.] Social Security Disability Income (S.S.D.I.) or Supplemental Security Income (S.S.I.) to which the applicant or client is entitled by law, shall not be used to meet the increased cost of subsistence created by his or her participation in a vocational rehabilitation program, unless deemed to be required by the Social Security Administration.**

**[Information**

**Whenever the client's basic living expenses are not being met, counselors should assist the client in applying for appropriate local, state, or federal assistance programs.**

**In situations when the client is receiving other funds for maintenance (e.g., state supplement, city welfare, S.S.I., etc.), counselors must be careful not to jeopardize these benefits when providing additional maintenance. Problems can sometimes be avoided, for example, by paying college room and board directly to the school rather than providing funds directly to the client for this purpose.]**

**(6) Mobility Services**

**[Policy]**

**Mobility services are those services that enable a person who is legally blind to travel independently to evaluation, training, and employment locations. Mobility services, as provided through the Vocational Rehabilitation Program at BESB, include travel training with the use of a white cane, bus/transportation training, and sighted guide training to the client and significant others who interact with the client on a frequent basis. The Bureau does not provide evaluations and training in the use of guide dogs.**

**Since safe travel skills are essential for participation in evaluations, training and employment situations, mobility training may be provided prior to the implementation of an Individualized Plan for Employment if the service is necessary to permit participation in other vocational rehabilitation services. The Bureau provides trained staff for mobility assessments and training. If a client requires mobility services while participating in a vocational rehabilitation service out of state, the Department of Rehabilitation Services may establish a fee schedule for that service, based upon the existing fee structure of the public Vocational Rehabilitation Program of that state.**

**The length of a mobility program is contingent on the client's needs and ability at any given time. Mobility services may be provided at various times throughout the rehabilitation process to assist in orienting a client to a new evaluation, training, or employment situation.**

**[Procedures**

**The Counselor and client will mutually identify the need for travel assessments and training as part of the rehabilitation process. When it is determined that mobility services are needed to enable a client to safely participate in evaluations, training, or employment, the Counselor will initiate a referral to the Mobility Unit of BESB.**

**For an Orientation and Mobility referral, counselors should provide a copy of the intake form which should have the necessary biographical information that is required. In addition, the following information should be on the back of the intake form:**

**a. The name of the Counselor.**

**b. Present mode of travel (if known).**

**c. Under "Objective", indicate goals (if known) which would influence the mobility objective (i.e., competitive or supportive employment) which might require the use of public transportation.**

**d. Include under "Comments" whatever would be appropriate for the instructor to know.]**

**The Individualized Plan for Employment of the individual should include mobility services when it is determined that such services may be necessary during the vocational rehabilitation process.**

**(7) Occupational Licenses, Tools, Equipment, and Initial Stocks (including livestock), and Supplies**

**[Policy]**

**For persons who desire to establish a vocational goal of self-employment or business owner, the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program may pay such costs as are reasonable for the client to enter self-employment.  The client will be required to match BESB Vocational Rehabilitation funding as specified in this policy.**

**[Prior to the development of] \*For\* an Individualized Plan for Employment or amendment that has a goal of self-employment or business ownership, a business plan shall be developed by the client in a format prescribed by the Bureau and submitted to a Connecticut Small Business Development Center, Chamber of Commerce, or SCORE for an assessment of the economic viability of the proposal. Upon completion of their review, the business plan and the accompanying economic viability assessment report shall be submitted to the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program Business Advisory Committee for review and action.  This committee shall consist of three current and/or former members of the State Rehabilitation Council who serve or have served in the appointment categories of business, industry, labor, or in the appointment category of recipient of services if the appointee currently owns and operates a business. The Business Advisory Committee will convene within thirty days of receipt of a business plan. Minutes of all deliberations of the Committee shall be maintained and provided to the client. The client shall be provided with the opportunity to attend all Committee meetings where their business plan is discussed and offer responses to questions raised during deliberations.**

**In situations where a business plan does not receive unanimous approval from all three committee members, the client shall be given written instructions for action to be taken to make the plan acceptable, and it may be resubmitted for approval.  A business plan submission shall be considered open for further review and resubmission for a period not to exceed six months from the date of the first meeting of the Business Advisory Committee to review the plan, or until such time as the Committee votes to approve or disapprove the plan, whichever comes first. Once a plan is no longer considered to be open due to the passing of six months from the first meeting of the Business Advisory Committee or a vote to reject the plan, any new or revised business plan submission shall be subject to the Vocational Rehabilitation policies in effect at the time of submission of the new or revised business plan. A vote of rejection by one Committee member shall be deemed sufficient to consider the plan unapproved. Any participating Committee member or the client may call for a vote on the plan after discussion of the plan’s content has reached conclusion, or in the opinion of two of the three Committee members or the client, the plan review has reached a point where no further information can be expected to reasonably contribute to further discussions. At the request of the client, a Committee member may be replaced with another member from the list of eligible candidates to serve as Committee members prior to a vote if the client can substantiate that a \*bona\* [bone] fide conflict of interest exists that would prevent the Committee member from rendering an informed and impartial vote on the business plan. Committee members may not be removed from future meetings of the Committee based solely on their voting history in prior deliberations. A Committee of three new members shall be selected in situations where a client returns with a new or revised business plan subsequent to a vote to reject the prior business plan(s). All licenses, tools, equipment, stock, and supplies necessary to operate the business must be included in the business plan in order to receive Bureau funding in these categories.**

**Upon obtaining approval from the committee, the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program shall purchase licenses, tools, equipment and stock on behalf of the client, consistent with the approved business plan and State of Connecticut purchasing requirements. Ownership of equipment, tools and stock shall be with the client after documentation is provided that substantiates the use of the equipment for the business as evidenced by financial statements and on-site inspection by the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor. Subsequent to the transfer of equipment ownership to the client, at such time as the client no longer needs the equipment for the operation of the business, disposal will be at the client’s discretion. The cost of maintenance or repair of the equipment shall rest with the client. In circumstances where a client requests, the Bureau may reimburse the client for the documented cost of the repair and applicable shipping of said equipment to and from the repair location.**

**In considering a vocational goal of self-employment or business owner, the following requirements and restrictions shall apply:**

**\*(A)\* [A)] The Bureau will not purchase or lease a building or dwelling.**

**\*(B)\* [B)] The Bureau will not substantially alter the physical structure of an existing building or dwelling unless such alterations are directly related to the disability of the client.**

**\*(C)\* [C)] The Bureau will not purchase all or part of a franchise or business.**

**\*(D)\* [D)] The Bureau will not purchase motor vehicles, aircraft, or boats.**

**\*(E)\* [E)] All applicable State of Connecticut purchasing regulations, policies, and procedures must be adhered to.**

**\*(F)\* [F)] The Bureau will not provide funding for business ventures that do not meet the standards of the community, or that offer as their primary focus the provision of services or products that are controlled or regulated, such as but not limited to alcohol, tobacco, firearms, pornography, or drug paraphernalia.**

**\*(G)\* [G)] The Bureau requires the client to maintain a physical presence at the location of the business on an ongoing basis.  Third party business ventures, with the client as a removed or pass through partner are not eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation funds.**

**\*(H)\* [H)] To increase the opportunity for success of the new business venture, the client shall permit access to business records and onsite follow up by Bureau staff during the first six months of operation of the business.**

**\*(I)\* [I)]  Salaries and/or fringe benefit costs of the client or employees of the client, as well as contractor fees and/or consultant fees are not eligible for funding and shall not be counted in the client equity match requirement.**

**\*(J)\* [J)] Expenses related to the primary residence of the client (including but not limited to rent, mortgage payments, utilities) shall not be eligible for Bureau funding or be counted towards the client equity match requirements.**

**\*(K)\* [K)] The business plan shall include a line item for liability insurance to protect the business.**

**The Bureau will provide necessary licenses, tools, equipment and initial stock for a person to successfully establish a new business or maintain an existing business, subject to approval of a business plan.  The term “initial” refers to the establishment period for a new business, which shall not exceed 6 months from the first day of operation, or in the case of an existing business that has received business plan approval, 6 months from the date of plan implementation \*as noted by the first purchase authorization date of a service or item from the approved business plan\*.**

**In situations where a client is seeking only adaptive technology devices to maintain or expand an existing business (existence of business substantiated by verified income reports such as tax filings) a business plan submission shall not be required. For new businesses, adaptive technology devices shall be listed in the business plan but shall not be subject to the equity matching requirements. Adaptive technology devices are items designed and marketed specifically for use by an individual with a disability.**

**Credentialing/Experience:**

**The business plan shall document and demonstrate to the Business Advisory Committee that the applicant has the required license, certification and educational degree that is customary for the occupation. For occupations that have no specific credentialing requirement, the applicant shall document that their competencies and experience are consistent with the industry standard, including membership in professional organizations of the industry.**

**Co-Sharing of Business Plan expenses:**

**Clients submitting a Business Plan requesting funds for either a new or existing business are required to inject an equity contribution into that business before BESB funds will be committed. As detailed below, the size and composition of required equity contributions are based on the amount of funds requested.**

**Business Plan requests from $1.00 to $10,000.00 require a ten (10) percent client equity contribution, of which up to 100 percent of the client contribution can be in-kind match.**

**Business Plan requests from $10,001.00 to $20,000.00 require a fifteen (15) percent client equity contribution, of which up to 100 percent of the client contribution can be in-kind match. No more than fifty (50) percent of the total business plan funding request can be for business equipment.**

**Business Plan requests from $20,001.00 to $50,000.00 require a twenty-five (25) percent client equity contribution, of which a minimum of fifty (50) percent must be liquid match and the remaining fifty (50) percent may be in-kind match. No more than thirty-five (35) percent of the total business plan funding request can be for business equipment and no more than twenty (20) percent can be for rent and/or utilities.**

**Business Plan requests over $50,000.00 require a thirty-five (35) percent client equity contribution, of which a minimum of fifty (50) percent must be liquid match and the remaining fifty (50) percent may be in-kind match. No more than twenty-five (25) percent of the total business plan funding request can be for business equipment and no more than fifteen (15) percent can be for rent and/or utilities.**

**Equity contributions are defined as follows:**

* **In Kind Contribution – This can take the form of cash, the current market value of tangible assets either used or to be used in the business, funds invested in the business, or any related contribution as approved by the Business Advisory Committee.**
* **Liquid Contribution – Documented equity in the form of liquid assets such as cash, stocks, bonds, securities, and/or alternative financing.**

**[Procedures**

**It is the Vocational Rehabilitation Program's policy to provide a client with licenses, tools, equipment, and initial stock that are essential and necessary to carry out the aims and purposes of self-employment.  The monetary allowance for such tools and equipment will be in keeping with the minimum cost of such tools and equipment.**

**Initial stocks of merchandise, livestock, and other products essential to the establishment of a business enterprise will be provided to the extent that the client will be enabled to conduct a business in keeping with the type of enterprise and the location and amount of activity that may be warranted in each specific case.  These services may be provided and purchased for a period not to exceed six months from the date of inception of the business, or in the case of an existing business that has received business plan approval, 6 months from the date of plan implementation.**

**Where occupational licenses are deemed essential to the establishment and/or operation of a business enterprise, VR will provide the cost of the initial licenses.**

**While the client is expected to develop a comprehensive business plan, the Counselor should play a key role in linking the client to a Connecticut Small Business Development Center, Chamber of Commerce or SCORE for their expertise and technical skills to assist in business plan development.  Other resources that may be able to offer technical assistance can include the Small Business Administration, Senior Job Centers, and loaning institutions such as banks.]**

**\*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselors should inform clients of State of Connecticut purchasing regulations, policies, and procedures which may preclude the client from obtaining a specific make and model of a desired item.  The competitive bidding process may result in the selection of identical or similar items to those specified in business plans.  Clients should be advised to provide as much detail about specialized equipment as possible in order to have the bidding process address their specific needs.**

**(8) Placement Services**

**[Policy]**

**Placement is the process of planning and providing services to assist clients in obtaining appropriate employment. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor and the client have primary responsibility for the client's placement in appropriate and satisfactory employment. \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselors, clients, and other individuals (as needed) should work as a team in the placement process. Employment \*that is integrated and that provides for competitive and customary wages and benefits\* should be the focus throughout the vocational rehabilitation process and placement services may be provided at any point, as appropriate. When a client has obtained the vocational skills as identified in their rehabilitation program, every effort will be made to match the job to the client to insure suitable employment. Services \*accompanying placement services\* may include job coaching, situational assessments with site development, purchased placement services, [and preparing the client for an] interview \*preparation\*, assistance in preparing a resume, job development and use of the Connecticut’s One Stop Centers, and other community resources as appropriate.**

**[Procedure**

**When a client has completed his or her preparation for employment (counseling, physical restoration, training, etc.) and is ready for employment, but has not yet been placed or has been placed but has not yet begun employment, the case may be placed in Status 20 (Ready for Employment). The status change should be recorded in the usual manner. The Counselor should continue to provide counseling as needed and make an active effort to effect placement, in cooperation with other agencies.**

**When the client has been prepared for, placed in, and begun employment, his or her case should be changed to Status 22 (In Employment). The status change should be recorded as well as the job title, wage, and employer. The client should be observed in this employment for a minimum of ninety (90) days, prior to closure as employed (Status 26). to insure that an adequate adjustment has been made in the employment situation. The length of time needed for follow-up will vary in accordance with the needs and limitations of each individual.**

**Information**

**The objective of placement efforts is to achieve employment. Successful employment outcomes include: full-time or as appropriate and desired by the client, part-time employment in the competitive labor market; self-employment; [homemaking]; farm [or family work (including activity for which payments are in-kind rather than in cash)]; home-based employment; supported employment; or other gainful work.**

**The IPE will reflect the anticipated employment outcome. Every Counselor is responsible for assuring the placement of assigned clients. As with any other type of service, placement can be pursued collaboratively and cooperatively with various specialists and resources. At a minimum, the Counselor should coordinate services provided by others on behalf of a specific client.**

**Some Examples of Commonly Provided Placement Services:**

**1. Evaluation of client's job-readiness.**

**2. Counseling around the impact of employment on client's benefits.**

**3. Collaboration with employment service programs and other agencies providing placement-related services.**

**4. Employer contact and job development.**

**5. Task analysis and job restructuring.**

**6. Study of employment trends and economic forecasting.**

**7. Individual and group instruction in job seeking skills (including resume development).**

**8. Situational placement or job shadowing for evaluation purposes.**

**9. Accompanying clients to job interviews, when appropriate.**

**10. Provision of suitable clothing, vocational tools, licenses, equipment, or transportation.**

**11. Technical assistance to employers (e.g., meeting affirmative action goals, consultation to employee assistance programs).**

**12. Work site modifications, rehabilitation technology services, or architectural consultation.**

**13. Consultation with employers on work adjustment issues (e.g., conflict resolution, education on disability issues, reasonable accommodations).**

**14. Counseling to develop job retention skills (e.g., employer expectations, work rules).**

**15. Referrals to and case coordination with One Stop Career Centers through the Work Force Investment System.]**

**(9) Personal Assistance Services**

**[Policy]**

**Personal assistance services refers to a range of services, \*including training in managing, supervising, and directing personal assistance services,\* provided by one or more persons, designed to assist an individual with significant disabilities that include legal blindness \*or visual impairment\* to perform daily living activities on or off the job that would typically be performed by the individual \*without assistance\* if they did not have a disability. The provision of services is intended to increase the individual’s control in life and ability to perform everyday activities on and off the job. Personal assistance services can be provided to individuals to enable participation in trial work experiences [or extended evaluations], or to enable participation in vocational rehabilitation services identified in the Individualized Plan for Employment.**

**The provision of funding for personal assistance services is time limited and cannot extend past the period when an individual has been determined to have achieved the employment outcome identified and agreed to in the Individualized Plan for Employment.**

**Bureau funding will be based upon approved fee schedules or prevailing rates in situations where fee structures do not exist. Authorizations for services will be calculated based upon the number of hours that are required for the client to prepare for and participate in vocational rehabilitation services. It will be the responsibility of the client to hire the personal care attendant(s), and to provide documentation of hours rendered when submitting invoices to the Bureau for payment.**

**[Procedure**

**The Counselor and client will discuss the need for personal assistance services in situations where the nature of a person’s disability related impediments preclude them for directly performing daily living activities that are essential to enable preparation for and participation in vocational rehabilitation services.]**

**In determining the need for this service, the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor and client should explore the availability of comparable services and benefits that may cover all or part of the costs of personal care attendants. A review of the time requirements to prepare for, travel to, participate in and return home from assessments, training or employment will be necessary. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor shall document the hours that will be required in the case record of services. Since personal assistance services will not be funded by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program after the achievement of an employment outcome, it is essential that the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor and client explore alternative funding arrangements prior to case inactivation to ensure a stable job placement will remain in effect.**

**Existing fee schedules may be used to fund services on a fee for service basis. In situations where no fee structure exists, the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor may use the prevailing hourly rate for the authorization of services within the particular region of the state where the service is to be provided.**

**Clients are to be provided with a [Daily Service Delivery Log] form, which must be filled out completely by the person(s) providing the personal assistance services and signed by the client as verification that the services were provided for payments to be processed.**

**[The Counselor should remind the client to submit the required paperwork for reimbursement monthly to expedite payment. All billing invoice forms (CO-17) must be accompanied by completed and signed Daily Service Delivery Logs.]**

**(10) Rehabilitation Teaching Services**

**[Policy]**

**In many instances, it is essential to provide the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] client with specific instruction in the areas of communication, skills of daily living, and home management techniques \*as accompanying services that enable the client to prepare for, engage in, and retain employment\*. These services are \*primarily\* provided through the rehabilitation teaching staff at this Bureau.**

**These rehabilitation teaching services are to be identified as part of the IPE.**

**[Procedure**

**During the course of the vocational rehabilitation process, the Counselor and client may identify that rehabilitation teaching assessments are necessary to determine the level of functional skills in independent living or homemaking activities.**

**Rehabilitation teaching services of a short-term nature that are necessary for a client to achieve a goal of homemaker, will be provided directly by the Rehabilitation Teachers of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.**

**For situations where the client need is primarily for independent living skills, or for long-term training, such as Braille instruction, a referral will be made to the Adult Services Program of the Bureau.]**

**Daily living aids, as recommended by the Rehabilitation Teacher, may be provided through authorization if the service is planned for in an IPE.**

**[REHABILITATION TEACHER REFERRAL**

**REFERRED BY:**

**DATE:**

**CLIENT NAME:**

**ADDRESS:**

**PHONE NO.: SSN:**

**DOB: ACUITY:**

**DIAG.:**

**HEALTH/MEDICATIONS:**

**A. This client has been referred for Vocational Rehabilitation. A social worker has indicated that the client \_\_\_\_\_is/\_\_\_\_\_would like to be a homemaker. In meeting with this client, the social worker has identified that the client is unable to perform the following homemaker activities:**

**Cleaning the Home**

**Meal Preparation and Cooking**

**Laundry and/or Clothing Repair**

**Reading Mail**

**Paying Bills**

**Shopping for Food and Necessities**

**Family Care Responsibilities**

**Other:**

**B. Counselor Comments:**

**C. Anticipated Closure Date:**

**D. Sent for Mobility y/n Date:**

**Sent for Low Vision y/n Date:]**

**(11) Services to Family Members**

**[Policy]**

**Family Member, for purposes of receiving vocational rehabilitation services, means an individual:**

**(A) who either:**

**(i) Is a relative or guardian of an applicant or eligible individual; or**

**(ii) Lives in the same household as an applicant or eligible individual;**

**(B) who has a substantial interest in the well-being of that individual; and**

**(C) whose receipt of vocational rehabilitation services is necessary to enable the applicant or eligible individual to achieve an employment outcome.**

**\*(D)\* The basic criteria for the provision of services to family members are:**

**\*(i)\* [a.] The family member or members must reside in the same household with the client and is related by blood or marriage, or is an individual with whom the individual with a disability has a close interpersonal relationship.**

**\*(ii)\* [b.] Such services may include only those services which may be expected to contribute substantially to the determination of the vocational rehabilitation potential or vocational rehabilitation of the client.**

**The scope of services to family members should be responsive to the needs of the client and be consistent with the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act and subsequent amendments governing the administration of the program. They may include any of the services delineated as vocational rehabilitation services. Illustrative of the types of services which may be provided are: counseling, both individual and group; child care or babysitting costs for young children of a client who is participating in an evaluation or training program; joint training of a spouse or other family member in operating a small business enterprise; transportation costs to enable a family member to accompany the client to various community resources, e.g. medical clinics, social agencies, etc.; and relocation costs to enable family members to accompany the client to a new place of employment.**

**Child care services may be provided to enable a client to participate in an evaluation or training program. This service may also be provided to support a client placed in new employment, consistent with the IPE, until they receive their second paycheck or complete the first month of employment, whichever comes first. All child care services will be based upon the prevailing rate for day care or babysitting services within the state. Only licensed day care facilities or homes may be used. Clients who choose to employ babysitting services within their home are fully responsible for any tax and social security liability that may be incurred. Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program funding will only be for expenses directly associated with the client's actual time spent in evaluation, training or employment, or traveling to and from the specific locations.**

**Where child care or babysitting expenses are necessary to enable a client to participate in higher education training, expenses will be subject to the unmet need of the individual as calculated by the financial aid officer of the educational institution. All policies pertaining to participation in institutions of higher education as detailed in [Chapter 3, Section 10, Subsection C (4) "Post-Secondary Training" of] this manual will apply.**

**\*It will be the responsibility of the client to obtain all necessary receipts that verify the provision of services in order to obtain payment for the services rendered.\***

**[Procedures**

**The Counselor and client will work together to identify whether family services are necessary during the rehabilitation process. In the event it is determined that family services are needed to enable the client to obtain the full benefit of participation in other vocational rehabilitation services as identified in the IPE, the Counselor will explain the Vocational Rehabilitation policies to the client.**

**In situations where child care or babysitting services are necessary to permit a client to participate in an evaluation or training program, or to support a client during the first month of a new employment situation, or until they receive their second paycheck (whichever comes first), the Counselor will verify the arrangement is within a licensed facility or home before making authorization. If babysitting services are going to be used in the client's home, the Counselor will inform the client of the need to consult with a tax representative for any possible social security or tax liabilities for this arrangement.**

**If child care or babysitting services are being provided as an ancillary service to a client's participation in training at institutions of higher education, the Counselor must review with the client the requirements and policies pertaining to higher education training (see Chapter 3, Section 10, Subsection C (4) of this manual). Since funding for this service will be based upon the unmet need of the individual, clients must make timely application for financial aid before consideration can be made for Bureau funding.**

**It will be the responsibility of the client to obtain all necessary receipts that verify the provision of services in order to obtain payment for the services rendered.]**

**(12) Transportation**

**[Policy]**

**Transportation means travel and related expenses that are necessary to enable an applicant or eligible individual to participate in any vocational rehabilitation service \*including expenses for training in the use of public transportation vehicles and systems\*. Transportation services will be provided to clients as needed, either for diagnostic or physical restoration services, or when in a training program. Transportation may also be provided to a client recently placed into employment until the second paycheck is received, or the first month of employment has been completed, whichever comes first. Transportation services may also be provided for certain family members who accompany the client to appointments, when it is necessary to facilitate the rehabilitation of the client. Transportation services will be authorized at the current State Fee Schedule rates for mileage if bus, ADA Paratransit, train, or taxi transportation is not available.**

**In situations where a client's sole option for transportation requires the hiring of a driver, the Bureau will pay the state minimum wage \*rate for the state in which the transportation service is being provided (or initiated in the case of a trip that crosses state lines)\* in addition to the \*State of Connecticut Comptroller’s approved reimbursement rate\* [fee schedule] for mileage to permit participation in evaluations, training, or until the client receives their second paycheck or completes the first month of new employment, whichever comes first.**

**If an attendant or escort is needed, the prevailing rate for that service will be used. Attendant or escort refers to a volunteer or paid individual who gives assistance to a client with a disability that includes impediments related to ambulating, and does not include persons who only serve as a driver for the client. It will be the responsibility of the client to hire a driver, attendant, or escort and provide all documentation to verify the provision of the service consistent with the IPE.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program will provide funding for standard round trip travel fares for clients to participate in residential training at locations beyond practical commuting distances. In these instances, the\*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] Program will cover the cost of one round trip ticket to and from the program. It will be the responsibility of the client to arrange transportation for any additional commuting trips home during the course of the program. The\*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] Program will provide additional round trip funding in situations where a facility shutdown requires residents to leave the program on a temporary basis. Air \*, rail, livery and bus\* travel arrangements must be made in accordance with requirements of the Office of the State Comptroller \*,utilizing authorized vendors and service providers where available.\***

**\*Relocation expenses to complete a move to a new residence, incurred by an eligible individual and family members in connection with a job placement that is a significant distance from the eligible individual's current residence would also be included within this policy. Expenses within this category are subject to state travel and procurement policies.\***

**All transportation services provided in relation to participation in training at institutions of higher education are subject to the unmet need of the individual. All policies as outlined in [Chapter 3, Section 10, Subsection C (4)] "Post-Secondary Training" will apply.**

**[Procedures**

**The Counselor is required to make a determination of whether transportation services are needed in support of another vocational rehabilitation service. Transportation means necessary travel and related expenses.**

**The Counselor may decide the mode of transportation based on the following:**

**a) circumstances and special needs of the client/applicant;**

**b) availability and appropriateness of public transportation;**

**c) least costly method which will still meet the needs of the client/applicant.**

**The Counselor will determine the rates of payment with the client/applicant, and will base the payment upon the type of transportation needed, as follows:**

**a) Agency fee schedules, or published rates for public transportation (e.g. buses, ADA Paratransit, taxi, livery services);**

**b) the rate established by the state for reimbursement mileage.**

**The Counselor may authorize payment for a driver based on the state minimum wage. If an attendant or escort is needed, the prevailing rate for that service will be used. Attendant or escort refers to a volunteer or paid individual who gives assistance to the individual with a disability and does not include persons who only serve as a driver for the client. It will be the responsibility of the client to hire a driver and provide all documentation to verify the provision of the service consistent with the IPE.**

**The Counselor may provide transportation for the client's family member, only when such services are necessary for the individual's rehabilitation.**

**The Counselor may provide funding for transportation to a client who has been placed in employment until the client has received their second paycheck or completed the first month of employment, whichever comes first.**

**In situations where travel by commercial airline is necessary for participation in evaluations or training, arrangements will be made through the Office of the State Comptroller. Only airline tickets obtained through the State Comptroller may be used for travel. Clients who choose to obtain their own airline tickets will not be eligible for any reimbursement from the Bureau.]**

**(13) Vending Facility Program**

**[Policy]**

**\*(A)\* [A]. Legal Authority**

**Legal authority is granted under Connecticut General Statutes which governs the establishment of vending facilities in public buildings, and establishes the sales and service fund.**

**\*(B)\* [B]. Persons to be Served**

**The Bureau will select and license as operators of vending facilities under this program, only persons with significant disabilities who meet the following qualifications: (1) are blind as defined in federal regulations issued pursuant to the Randolph-Sheppard Act; and (2) are qualified for the operation of a vending facility with such vocational rehabilitation services as may be necessary.**

**\*(C)\* [C]. Types of Business Enterprises**

**It shall be the policy of the Bureau to establish small businesses that may be operated successfully by \*individuals who are blind\* [blind persons]. Such businesses may include the broad categories of vending facilities as subject to the regulations under the Randolph-Sheppard Act for the sale of candy, tobacco products, and other feasible items; snack bars, cafeterias, and other food services. [VR will encourage the establishment of vending machine routes, other small businesses such as newsstands, small retail stores, repair shops, agricultural projects, and small manufacturing industries.]**

**\*(D)\* [D]. Policies Governing the Acquisition of Equipment and Initial Stocks and Supplies**

**\*The Vocational Rehabilitation Program may\* [It is the policy of VR to] purchase equipment and initial stock for each vending facility established. [The Bureau will secure facility locations in public buildings where rental charges are not made; however, in a desirable private building location, where the business will warrant it, rental charges may be made for which the operator will be liable.]**

**The evaluation of locations for vending facilities will take into consideration such factors as population, traffic, competition, continued availability and type of premises, potential return upon investment, and other applicable items.**

**\*(E)\* [E]. Policies Relating to Management Services and Supervision**

**\*(i)\* [1]. Management services and supervision for small business enterprises includes inspection, quality control, consultation, accounting, regulating, in-service training, and other related services provided on a systematic basis to support and improve small business enterprises operated by individuals with legal blindness.**

**\*(ii)\* [2]. \*Vending facilities established under the authority of Connecticut General Statute 10-303 shall be operated\* [It has been the policy of the Bureau to establish all of the facilities] as semi-controlled business enterprises. [This means that the location is controlled by Bureau.] The management \*oversight\* and supervision of the vending facility [and small business program] will be vested solely in the Bureau.**

**[Procedures**

**Referrals to the Vending Program**

**Counselors will follow the following procedures when a client is interested in the Vending Program:**

**1. Contact the Supervisor of Vending to arrange a meeting with the interested client. This is the first step before any formal referral occurs.**

**2. After it is determined that the client is interested and the Supervisor of Vending identifies that an evaluation is in order, submit a referral to BESB BEP Program through your supervisor, using the standard referral form. Attach a copy of the most recent eye report (be sure it states clearly the "best corrected vision") and any psychological and related data. Submit an authorization for the evaluation at the approved fee schedule rate if such a rate exists and if such an evaluation is required after consulting with the Supervisor of Vending.**

**At the end of the vending evaluation, you will receive a written report along with recommendations. If the client is deemed appropriate for the program, the Counselor can then authorize the training at the approved fee schedule rate if such a rate exists and is required by the Supervisor of Vending. Monthly training reports will be provided to assist the Counselor in monitoring the progress made during training.**

**Necessary equipment, initial inventory, licenses, fees and insurance may be authorized after the Counselor receives an itemized listing from the Vending Program staff. Equipment purchased will be limited to movable items and will not include any permanent fixtures.]**

**\*(14) Customized Employment**

**Customized employment is a type of competitive**

**integrated employment for an individual with a significant disability, that is based on an individualized determination of the unique strengths, needs, and interests of the individual. It is designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer.**

**Customized employment utilizes flexible strategies, such as job exploration by the individual and working with an employer to facilitate a job placement. This can involve identifying job tasks that may currently exist across multiple existing job titles within the company that are presently being unfulfilled or under-fulfilled by existing staff, or identifying a collection of tasks that are presently not assigned to any existing job description, but that the employer desires to fulfill.**

**Developing a set of job duties, a work schedule**

**and job arrangement to fulfill these duties, along with identification of the supervision of the employee**

**(including performance evaluation and review), and**

**determining a job location for the work to be accomplished are all factored into the discussion with the employer regarding the customization of an employment situation. Confirmation of the commensurate competitive wages that will be paid to the employee are an essential element of the discussion process.**

**Customized employment is an alternative that**

**enables individuals with disabilities and employers the opportunity to negotiate job tasks and/or reassign basic job duties to improve overall production in the workplace. For employers, customized employment allows an employer to examine its specific workforce needs and fulfill those needs with a well-matched employee.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor can directly provide, or purchase customized employment services from approved providers of such services. Additionally, the client may choose to directly negotiate for a customized employment arrangement with the employer, or use a professional representative to work with an employer to facilitate a job placement.**

**The full scope of vocational rehabilitation services are available to support the individual in the customized employment situation, including on-the-job supports such as supported employment, adaptive technology and other services as identified in the IPE of the individual.**

 **(15) Pre-Employment Transition Services**

**Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are services that offer an early start at job exploration. The services are intended to assist students with identifying career interests to be further explored through additional vocational rehabilitation services, including transition services. Pre-ETS are available to any individual or group of individuals who are visually impaired or legally blind, who meets the criteria for being a student with a disability, regardless of whether the student or students has applied for Vocational Rehabilitation Program services.**

**A student with a disability is an individual with a disability that includes legal blindness or visual impairment, in a secondary, post-secondary or other recognized education program, who is not younger than age 16 (unless a younger age for Pre-employment transition service is identified in the IEP of the individual by the Planning and Placement Team) and is not older than 21 years of age and is eligible for, and receiving, special education or related services under IDEA or section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.**

**Pre-Employment Transition Services may begin once a student requests or is recommended for one or more Pre-Employment Transition Services and documentation of a visual impairment or legal blindness is provided to the Bureau. Pre-ETS must be provided or arranged in collaboration with Local Education Agencies and are the only activities that can be paid for with the funds reserved under the Title I Vocational Rehabilitation federal grant award for this purpose.**

**(A) The Bureau provides the following Required Pre-Employment Transition Services:**

**(i) Job exploration counseling**

**Within a group setting job exploration counseling includes activities such as general job exploration counseling in a classroom or community setting and could include providing information regarding in-demand industry sectors and occupations, as well as nontraditional employment, information about labor market composition, administration of vocational interest inventories; and identification of career pathways of interest to the students.**

**On an individual basis, job exploration counseling might be provided in school, home, or the community setting and could include discussions pertinent to the particular student about vocational interest inventory results, in-demand occupations, career pathways, and local labor market information that applies to the student’s particular interests.**

**(ii) Work-based learning experiences**

**Work-based learning experiences may include opportunities that are in-school, after school, or outside of the traditional school setting (including internships). Work-based learning experiences must be provided in an integrated setting in the community to the maximum extent possible. All opportunities for work-based learning experiences in integrated settings should be explored and exhausted before placing students in non-integrated settings.**

**Examples of work-based learning experiences in group settings include coordinating a school-based program of job training and informational interviews to research employers, work-site tours to learn about necessary job skills, job shadowing, or mentoring opportunities in the community.**

**Examples of work-based learning experiences provided individually include paid or unpaid internships, apprenticeships, short-term employment, fellowships, or on-the-job trainings located in the community. If work-based learning experiences are paid, students with disabilities must be paid competitive wages to the same extent competitive wages are paid to students without disabilities in similar experiences. Training stipends are permissible for students with disabilities participating in unpaid work-based learning experiences commensurate with and to the same extent that they are provided to students without disabilities participating in these experiences.**

**Pre-Employment Transition Services reserved funds from the Title I federal award may be used to support the participation of the student or students in work-based learning experiences. Examples of support services may include interpreter or reader services, or accessible informational materials necessary to ensure equal access to the work-based learning experience, fees charged by the employer to provide the work-based learning experience (including the employer's costs incurred for printing of training materials, purchasing and installing adaptive technology for students to use at the location, the cost of employer-provided staff and trainers who are teaching the student, and other costs incurred by the employer in providing the work-based learning experience to the students, which are not individualized in nature).**

**(iii) Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in**

**comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs at institutions of higher education.**

**Counseling on specific opportunities in a group setting may include, providing information on course offerings, career options, the types of academic and occupational training needed to succeed in the workplace, and post-secondary opportunities associated with career fields or pathways.**

**Counseling may also be provided on an individual basis and may include examples such as advising students and parents or representatives on academic curricula, providing information about college application and admissions processes, completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and providing resources that may be used to support individual student success in education and training such as disability support services.**

**(iv) Workplace readiness training to develop social**

**skills and independent living workplace readiness training provided in a group setting may be offered in a generalized manner in a classroom or other such group settings to provide programming to assist students with disabilities to develop social skills and independent living skills necessary to prepare for eventual employment. These services could teach skills such as communication and interpersonal skills, financial literacy, group orientation and mobility skills, job-seeking skills, and understanding employer expectations for punctuality and performance, as well as other “soft” skills necessary for employment.**

**These services may also be customized and provided on an individual basis to an individual’s needs in a work readiness training program provided in an educational or community-based setting, including at an employment site, through instruction, as well as opportunities to acquire and apply knowledge.**

**(v) Instruction in self-advocacy (including instruction in person-centered planning), which may include peer mentoring (including peer mentoring from individuals with disabilities working in competitive integrated employment).**

**These services can be provided through group or individualized opportunities that include students conducting informational interviews, mentoring with educational staff such as principals, nurses, teachers, or office staff; or mentoring with individuals employed by or volunteering for employers, boards, associations, or organizations in integrated community settings. Additional examples of these services include participating in youth leadership activities offered in educational or community settings.**

**(B) Individualized Plan for Employment**

**When a student is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, his or her Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) will be prepared in coordination with the local education agency's (LEA) Individual Education Program (IEP). Every effort will be made to ensure that the IPE and the IEP complement one another and work toward the same objectives for the student.**

**Students who have applied and been found eligible for vocational rehabilitation services will have an IPE developed within 90 days of the date of eligibility determination unless the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the client (if age 18 or order), their parent or legal guardian, or authorized representative agree to the extension of that deadline to a specific date by which the Individualized Plan for Employment must be completed. It is understood that for a student in the early years of the transition process that a specific employment outcome may not be known or selected at the time of IPE development. Therefore, the anticipated employment outcome stated on the IPE may be identified as a description of the individual’s projected post-school employment outcome.**

**The IPE for a student with a disability may include only Pre-Employment Transition Services as requested by the individual, their parent or legal guardian or authorized representative, or it may include a combination of Pre-Employment Transition Services and additional vocational rehabilitation services. Only services that are identified as Pre-Employment Transition Services, and the accompanying time spent by Bureau staff in planning, coordinating and delivering Pre-Employment Transition Services may be charged to the federal Title I funds reserved for this purpose.**

**(C) Continuation of Services Under an Order of Selection**

**In the event that a student with a disability is found eligible for services while the Bureau is operating under and Order of Selection, so long as the student began receiving at least one Pre-Employment Transition Service prior to an eligibility determination and placement in a closed order of selection priority category, that same Pre-Employment Transition Service and any other Pre-Employment Transition Services may continue, even while the student is assigned to a closed order of selection priority category.**

**For students who have not begun receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services and are determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and placed into a closed order of selection priority category, the Bureau may provide general transition services that benefit a group of students with disabilities to ensure the continuation of beneficial services, but may not begin Pre-Employment Transition Services.**

**(D) Pre-Employment Transition Services Authorized Activities**

**If funds reserved for the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services remain after all necessary “required” activities have been provided, the Bureau may provide other “authorized” activities that improve the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-secondary education or an employment outcome, and that support the arrangement or provision of the “required” activities.**

**The Bureau must first determine whether the funds reserved for the provision of “required” Pre-Employment Transition Services are sufficient to meet the Pre-Employment Transition needs for all students in need of such activities, prior to utilizing reserved funds for “authorized” activities.**

**Authorized Pre-Employment Activities include:**

**(i) Implementing effective strategies to increase the likelihood of independent living and inclusion in communities and competitive integrated employment.**

**(ii) Developing and improving strategies for individuals with intellectual disabilities and individuals with significant disabilities to live independently, participate in post-secondary education experiences, and obtain, advance in and retain competitive integrated employment.**

**(iii) Providing instruction to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, school transition personnel, and other persons supporting students with disabilities.**

**(iv) Disseminating information about innovative, effective, and efficient approaches to achieve the goals of Pre-Employment Transition Services.**

**(v) Coordinating activities with transition services provided by Local Education Agencies under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.**

**(vi) Applying evidence-based findings to improve policy, procedure, practice, and the preparation of personnel, in order to better achieve the goals of Pre-Employment Transition Services.**

**(vii) Developing model transition demonstration projects.**

**(viii) Establishing or supporting multistate or regional partnerships involving States, Local Education Agencies, Vocational Rehabilitation Programs, developmental disability agencies, private businesses, or other participants to achieve Pre-Employment Transition Services goals.**

**(ix) Disseminating information and strategies to improve the transition to post-secondary activities of individuals who are members or traditionally unserved and underserved populations.**

**(E) Pre-Employment Transition Coordination**

**Pre-Employment Transition Coordination activities include activities such as:**

**(i) Attending IEP meetings, when invited.**

**(ii) Working with the local workforce development boards, one-stop centers, and employers to develop work opportunities for students with disabilities.**

**(iii) Working with schools to coordinate and ensure the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services.**

**(iv) Attending person-centered planning meetings for students with disabilities receiving services under title XIX of the Social Security Act, when invited.\***

**(16)\* [(14)] Other Goods and Services**

**[Policy]**

**Other goods and services may be provided which are necessary to enable a client to derive the full benefit of vocational rehabilitation services in order to obtain an employment outcome consistent with their IPE. The provision of these goods and services must be provided in accordance with all applicable state fee schedules, purchasing policies, and procedures. Equipment and services related to the operation of a business or self-employment venture must be included as part of an approved business plan.**

**[Procedure**

**The Counselor must determine if services necessary for a client to participate in the vocational rehabilitation process are not identified in other sections of this manual. In these situations, the supervisor should be consulted regarding a determination of the applicability of the service as part of the IPE.**

**The most frequent use of this category pertains to services and equipment to be provided as part of an approved business plan. Some examples include, but are not limited to:**

**1. Advertising to announce the establishment of a new business and providing a suitable sign for it.**

**2. Minor alterations or renovations to make available space usable for a vending stand operation. This type of expenditure, if related to Small Business Enterprises should be accounted for under that category.**

**3. The payment of an initial period of rent on premises to be used for a business in which a client is to be established, or on equipment which is not ordinarily purchased.**

**4. The initial payment of premiums for insurance of business equipment, premises, or personal liability for a customary initial period.**

**Section 11. - IPE Completed, Ready for Employment (Status 20)**

**This status may be used to signifying that a client has received all of the services planned for in the Individualized Plan for Employment and is ready for employment. While in this status, the Counselor and client will explore and develop prospective employment situations commensurate with the client's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice leading to placement in a specific vocation or job.**

**The client remains in this status until he/she is placed in employment, the IPE is amended and the client is again receiving services, placement services are temporarily interrupted and the case is placed in Status 24, or service is terminated and the case is closed in Status 28.]**

**Section \*11\* [12]. - Employed (Status 22)**

**Once the client has [been placed in an employment situation] \*begun competitive and integrated employment with wages and benefits not less than the customary rate paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by other employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who are similarly situated in similar occupations by the same employer and who have similar training, experience, and skills,\* the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] Counselor will place the case in Status 22 preparing a case narrative identifying the type of employment, the wages the client is earning, along with any other pertinent information. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor will monitor the case for \*an appropriate period of time, but not less than\* a minimum of 90 days after the completion of substantial services \*necessary to ensure the stability of the employment outcome, and the individual no longer needs vocational rehabilitation services\* [in order to assure that the client has been successfully placed and there are no problems that will interfere with employment]. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor will keep a running case record of all activities that transpire while the client is in Status 22.**

**For clients who are working at the time of application, but who require services to maintain employment, the case may be placed into Status 22 upon the completion of substantial services that enable the client to successfully maintain employment.**

**\*For clients in self-employment, the case may be placed in Status 22 after the completion of substantial services that enable the client to derive income from the business that is comparable to the income received by other individuals who are not individuals with disabilities and who are self-employed in similar occupations or on similar tasks and who have similar training, experience and skills.\***

**The client remains in this status until\*:\***

**\*a)\* [1)] the employment is evaluated for \*an appropriate period of time, but not less than\* [at least] ninety (90) days after the completion of substantial services, and is determined to be successful based on the mutual decision of the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor and the client \*that the job is stable and no additional services are needed\*, and the case is closed as \*employment outcome achieved\* [successfully rehabilitated] (Status 26)\*;\* [, 2)]**

**\*b)\* the individual's employment is terminated prior to the completion of the ninety (90) days and new or additional services are required to regain employment (Status [14, 16,] 18 [or 20])\*;\* [, 3)]**

**\*c)\* employment is interrupted prior to the completion of the ninety (90) days (Status 24)\*;\* [,] or [4)]**

**\*d)\* employment is terminated and the case is closed in Status 28 if the client no longer desires to receive vocational rehabilitation services.**

**Section \*12\* [13]. \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [– VR] Services Interrupted (Status 24)**

**When a particular situation develops that interferes with the client's progress in the provision of services as outlined in the IPE, the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor will place the case in Status 24 signifying that services are temporarily interrupted due to specific circumstances or conditions. The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor will monitor the case and make appropriate case recordings indicating the client's progress. A case is placed in this status if services are interrupted while in either Status [14, 16,] 18, 20, or 22. Clients remain in this status until either returning to one of the aforementioned status or the case is closed \*with employment outcome not achieved\* [as not rehabilitated] (Status 28).**

**Section \*13\* [14]. - Case \*Inactivation\* [Closure] (Status 08, 26, 28, 30, [and] 36 \*and 40\*)**

**[The Counselor shall close an individual's case record at any time in the Vocational Rehabilitation process when it is determined that the individual is not eligible, is unavailable for diagnostic or planned services, chooses not to participate, or is rehabilitated.]**

**a) Closing Case Records**

**[Closure of an individual's case record is the action taken by VR when it has determined that, as appropriate, planned services, expenditures, and reports are completed, and that additional vocational rehabilitation services are either unnecessary or inappropriate, except as they may be provided under post-employment services. Such closure action is required for all case records and may occur at any point in the process, upon the above determination.]**

**Criteria for closing case records are set forth in this section for ensuring that statutory and regulatory requirements are met.**

**Requirements for Closing Cases**

**All cases being closed from the vocational rehabilitation files in Status 26 (successful \*competitive integrated\* employment outcome) will be reviewed and approved by the rehabilitation supervisor or designee prior to making the status change [on the Counselor's master list].**

**\*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselors will send a letter prior to closure advising the client that his or her case will be closed as inactive at the end of [30] \*10 (ten) business\* days from the date of the letter. The letter must indicate the reason for closure as well as a statement informing the client that he or she may question or object to the closure decision within the specified time period. Materials on the appeals process and the Client Assistance Program will be provided and referenced in the closure letter.**

**[Actions specifically related to the case closure process follow with more detail provided in subsequent sections of this section.**

**VR Closure Procedures**

**1) Counselor notifies Secretary of cases to be closed;**

**2) Secretary makes copy of authorized expenditure sheets from case folder, indicating status in top right-hand corner, and researches status of payments for authorized expenditures (all payments shall be written in red ink in far right column);**

**3) Secretary checks for verification of payment in computer, dbase or cards, depending on dates of authorizations. For recent (within the past year) authorizations that cannot be located, cost sheet(s) is given to the Business Office.**

**a) For completed cost sheets, the secretary totals all noted payments and returns it to the Counselor to close the case.**

**b) For incomplete cost sheets, the secretary returns the cost sheet to the Counselor, who calls the client or vendor to verify whether services were actually rendered within a 12 month period.**

**If services were rendered, the Counselor resubmits the cost sheet to the secretary for follow-up with the vendor to obtain the bill.**

**If services were not rendered, the Counselor writes "cancel" in the appropriate area on the cost sheet and notifies the secretary to cancel the authorization in the database system.**

**4) The secretary tabulates the final costs. The Counselor then proceeds with the case closure.]**

**b) \*Case Inactivation\* [Closures] for Reasons of Ineligibility (Status 08, 28, and 30)**

**\*(1) Ineligible for Services (Status 08)**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor can only close a case in Status 08 with a determination of ineligibility for vocational rehabilitation services after reviewing the basis for the determination with the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, and after providing an opportunity for full consultation with the individual or, as appropriate, with the individual's representative. The individual must be informed in writing with a minimum of ten (10) business days’ notice, supplemented as necessary by other appropriate modes of communication consistent with the informed choice of the individual, of the ineligibility determination, including the reasons for that determination, and the means by which the individual may express and seek remedy for any dissatisfaction, including the procedures to request a review or appeal of the decision. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must provide the individual with information on services available from the Client Assistance Program and how to contact that program.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will offer to refer the individual to other programs that are part of the one-stop service delivery system under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that can address the individual's training or employment related needs; or to Federal, State, or local programs or service providers, including, as appropriate, independent living programs and extended employment providers, best suited to meet their rehabilitation needs, if the ineligibility determination is based on a finding that the individual has chosen not to pursue, or is incapable of achieving, an employment outcome.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor shall review, within 12 months and annually thereafter if requested by the individual or, if appropriate, by the individual's representative any ineligibility determination that is based on a finding that the individual is incapable of achieving an employment outcome. This review need not be conducted in situations in which the individual has refused it, the individual is no longer present in the State, the individual's whereabouts are unknown, or the individual's medical condition is rapidly progressive or terminal.**

**(2) Subsequent Determinations of Ineligibility (Status 28 and 30)**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor can only close a case in Status 28 or 30 with a determination that client is no longer eligible for vocational rehabilitation services after reviewing the basis for the determination with the Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, and after providing an opportunity for full consultation with the individual or, as appropriate, with the individual's representative. The individual must be informed in writing, with a minimum of ten (10) business days’ notice, supplemented as necessary by other appropriate modes of communication consistent with the informed choice of the individual, of the ineligibility determination, including the reasons for that determination, and the means by which the individual may express and seek remedy for any dissatisfaction, including the procedures to request a review or appeal of the decision. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must provide the individual with information on services available from the Client Assistance Program and how to contact that program.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will offer to refer the individual to other programs that are part of the one-stop service delivery system under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that can address the individual's training or employment related needs; or to Federal, State, or local programs or service providers, including, as appropriate, independent living programs and extended employment providers, best suited to meet their rehabilitation needs, if the ineligibility determination is based on a finding that the individual has chosen not to pursue, or is incapable of achieving, an employment outcome.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor shall review, within 12 months and annually thereafter if requested by the individual or, if appropriate, by the individual's representative any ineligibility determination that is based on a finding that the individual is incapable of achieving an employment outcome. This review need not be conducted in situations in which the individual has refused it, the individual is no longer present in the State, the individual's whereabouts are unknown, or the individual's medical condition is rapidly progressive or terminal.**

**c) Other Reasons for Case Inactivation in Status 08, 28, and 30**

**(1) Moving to Another State**

**Case inactivation for the reason of moving to another state is applicable for clients who are not able to, or not interested in participating in vocational rehabilitation services through this Bureau because of moving to another state. Case inactivation would not be applicable if:**

**(A) the client desires to remain engaged in services with this Bureau for the period of time necessary to facilitate an orderly transition from this Bureau to another state's services;**

**(B) the client is participating in out-of-state services under a trial work experience or IPE through this Bureau; or**

**(C) the client has obtained employment through services provided under an IPE developed with this Bureau and there are additional IPE services remaining to be completed.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor may assist the client to initiate services through other agencies in the state where the client now resides, obtaining a signed release of information from the client prior to exchanging information with the other agency.**

**Prior to case inactivation, the client must be informed of the decision in writing, with a minimum of ten (10) business days’ notice, supplemented as necessary by other appropriate modes of communication consistent with the informed choice of the individual. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must provide the individual with information on the appeals options and services available from the Client Assistance Program and how to contact that program.**

**(2) Client Is No Longer Legally Blind or Visually Impaired**

**At any time during the rehabilitation process, if a client's vision has recovered for reasons other than through the provision of physical restoration services, to a level such that the client is no longer legally blind, visually impaired progressive, or visually impaired (if the client was served by the Children’s Services Program of BESB on or after January 1, 2010), they shall be informed of this change in status and be notified that the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) is the Vocational Rehabilitation Program in Connecticut that serves individuals with other disabilities.**

**Clients shall be afforded the opportunity to have their case transferred to BRS, upon receipt of a signed release. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will make every effort to facilitate a smooth transition to BRS, and the case will be inactivated only after the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor has completed the requested transfer of information to BRS.**

**Since these situations do not involve a determination of ineligibility, but rather a transfer to the agency within Connecticut that serves persons with other disabilities, the reason for case closure will be noted as "Transfer to another agency".**

**Prior to case inactivation, the client must be informed of the decision in writing, with a minimum of ten (10) business days’ notice, supplemented as necessary by other appropriate modes of communication consistent with the informed choice of the individual. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must provide the individual with information on the appeals options and services available from the Client Assistance Program and how to contact that program.**

**(3) Refusing Services and Not Cooperating**

**As an equal partner in the vocational rehabilitation process, clients have the right to make informed choices regarding the selection of an employment outcome, the services to be provided and the entities that will be providing the services necessary to achieve an employment outcome. It is the responsibility of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to provide all relevant information available in order for the client to have the opportunity to make informed choices about services and vendors available. Clients have the right to decline services that are not essential to the achievement of an employment outcome. In circumstances where a client declines to participate in a service that the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor views as essential to the achievement of an employment outcome, an opportunity shall be afforded to the client to meet with the supervisory staff of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to review the circumstances and present information related to their decision.**

**The individual shall be informed of the rights and remedies available to them prior to the meeting, including the right to have an advocate or representative of the Client Assistance Program present during the meeting, and the right to pursue mediation, administrative review or hearing before an impartial hearing officer in lieu of, or in addition to meeting with supervisory staff. If the preponderance of information presented at the meeting results in a clear and convincing conclusion by supervisory staff that declining the service will be detrimental to the client achieving an employment outcome and the client continues to decline the service after all available information is provided, then a written decision shall be issued to the client within ten (10) business days informing them of the intent to inactivate their case services based upon refusal of essential services. Such written notification shall be in the clients preferred format and language and include a summary of the findings of the meeting. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must provide the individual with information on the appeals options and services available from the Client Assistance Program and how to contact that program.**

**Examples of situations where declining a service could result in a significant detriment to the vocational rehabilitation process include circumstances where a person is currently using illegal drugs or abusing alcohol and they decline to participate in a rehabilitative treatment program.**

**d) Case Inactivation After Achieving Employment Outcome (Status 26)**

**(1) Competitive Integrated Employment**

**(A) Competitive integrated employment refers to work that:**

**(i) Is performed on a full-time or part-time basis**

**(including self-employment) and for which an individual is compensated at a rate that is not less than the higher of the rate specified in section 6(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 206(a)(1)), or the rate required under the applicable State or local minimum wage law for the place of employment;**

**(ii) Is not less than the customary rate paid by the**

**employer for the same or similar work performed by other employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who are similarly situated in similar occupations by the same employer and who have similar training, experience, and skills; and**

**(iii) In the case of an individual who is self-employed, yields an income that is comparable to the income received by other individuals who are not individuals with disabilities and who are self-employed in similar occupations or on similar tasks and who have similar training, experience, and skills; and**

**(iv) Is eligible for the level of benefits provided to other employees; and**

**(v) Is at a location typically found in the community and where the employee with a disability interacts for the purpose of performing the duties of the position with other employees within the particular work unit and the entire work site, and, as appropriate to the work performed, other persons (e.g., customers and vendors), who are not individuals with disabilities (not including supervisory personnel or individuals who are providing services to such employee) to the same extent that employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who are in comparable positions interact with these persons; and**

**(vi) Presents, as appropriate, opportunities for**

**advancement that are similar to those for other employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who have similar positions.**

**(B) The record of services of an individual who has achieved an employment outcome in competitive integrated employment may be closed only if all of the following requirements are met:**

**(i) Employment outcome achieved. The individual has achieved the employment outcome that is described in the individual's Individualized Plan for Employment and is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.**

**(ii) Employment outcome maintained. The individual has maintained the employment outcome for an appropriate period of time, but not less than 90 days, necessary to ensure the stability of the employment outcome, and the individual no longer needs vocational rehabilitation services.**

**(iii) Satisfactory outcome. At the end of the appropriate period under sub-paragraph (B)(ii), the individual and the qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor employed by the Bureau consider the employment outcome to be satisfactory and agree that the individual is performing well in the employment.**

**(iv) The individual is informed through appropriate modes of communication of the availability of post-employment services.**

**(v) Prior to case inactivation, the client has been informed in writing of the decision, with a minimum of ten (10) business days’ notice, supplemented as necessary by other appropriate modes of communication consistent with the informed choice of the individual. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must provide the individual with information on the appeals options and services available from the Client Assistance Program and how to contact that program.**

**(2) Supported Employment**

**(A) An individual with a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability, who is employed in competitive integrated employment or who is employed in an integrated setting working on a short-term basis to achieve competitive integrated employment will be considered to have achieved an employment outcome, including customized employment, in supported employment when:**

**(i) The individual has completed supported employment services, except for any other vocational rehabilitation services listed on the Individualized Plan for Employment if the individual is working on a short-term basis toward the achievement of competitive integrated employment in supported employment; and**

**(ii) The individual has received up to 24 months of supported employment services; or**

**(iii) The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the individual have determined that an extension of time to provide supported employment services beyond 24 months is necessary to support and maintain the individual in supported employment before the individual transitions to extended services and that extension of time has concluded; and**

**(iv) The individual has transitioned to extended services provided by either the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for youth with the most significant disabilities, or another provider for youth or adults; and**

**(v) The individual has maintained employment and achieved stability in the work setting for at least 90 days after transitioning to extended services; and**

**(vi) The employment is individualized and customized consistent with the strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual; and**

**(vii) Prior to case inactivation, the client has been informed of the decision in writing, with a minimum of ten (10) business days’ notice, supplemented as necessary by other appropriate modes of communication consistent with the informed choice of the individual. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must provide the individual with information on the appeals options and services available from the Client Assistance Program and how to contact that program.**

**(B) The service record of an individual with a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability, who has achieved an employment outcome in supported employment in competitive integrated employment will be closed concurrently with the achievement of the employment outcome in supported employment when:**

**(i) The individual has achieved the employment outcome that is described in the individual's Individualized Plan for Employment and is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice;**

**(ii) The individual has maintained the employment outcome for an appropriate period of time, but not less than 90 days, necessary to ensure the stability of the employment outcome, and the individual no longer needs vocational rehabilitation services;**

**(iii) The individual and the qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor employed by the Bureau, at the end of the appropriate period, consider the employment outcome to be satisfactory and agree that the individual is performing well in the employment;**

**(iv) The individual is informed through appropriate modes of communication of the availability of post-employment services;**

**(v) The individual is not receiving extended services or any other vocational rehabilitation service provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program;**

**(vi) The individual has transitioned to extended services provided with funds other than Vocational Rehabilitation Program funds; and**

**(vii) Prior to case inactivation, the client has been informed of the decision in writing, with a minimum of ten (10) business days’ notice, supplemented as necessary by other appropriate modes of communication consistent with the informed choice of the individual. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must provide the individual with information on the appeals options and services available from the Client Assistance Program and how to contact that program.**

**(C) The service record of an individual with a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability who is working toward competitive integrated employment on a short-term basis and is receiving extended services from funds other than those provided through the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of the Bureau will be closed when:**

**(i) The individual achieves competitive integrated employment within the short-term basis period;**

**(ii) The individual has achieved the employment outcome that is described in the individual's Individualized Plan for Employment and is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice;**

**(iii) The individual has maintained the employment outcome for an appropriate period of time, but not less than 90 days, necessary to ensure the stability of the employment outcome, and the individual no longer needs vocational rehabilitation services;**

**(iv) The individual and the qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor employed by the Bureau, at the end of the appropriate period, consider the employment outcome to be satisfactory and agree that the individual is performing well in the employment;**

**(v) The individual is informed through appropriate modes of communication of the availability of post-employment services;**

**(vi) The individual is not receiving extended services or any other vocational rehabilitation service provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of the Bureau;**

**(vii) The individual has transitioned to extended services provided with funds other than Vocational Rehabilitation Program funds; and**

**(viii) Prior to case inactivation, the client has been informed of the decision in writing, with a minimum of ten (10) business days’ notice, supplemented as necessary by other appropriate modes of communication consistent with the informed choice of the individual. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must provide the individual with information on the appeals options and services available from the Client Assistance Program and how to contact that program.**

**(D) The service record of a youth with a most significant disability who is receiving extended services provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of the Bureau will be closed when:**

**(i) The youth with a most significant disability achieves an employment outcome in supported employment in competitive integrated employment without entering the short-term basis period;**

 **(ii) The youth is no longer eligible to receive extended services provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of the Bureau due to reaching the age of twenty-five (25), or having reached four (4) years of extended services funded by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program (whichever comes first), and another source of extended services has been identified to ensure there is no interruption of services;**

**(iii) The individual has achieved the employment outcome that is described in the individual's Individualized Plan for Employment and is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice;**

**(iv) The individual has maintained the employment outcome for an appropriate period of time, but not less than 90 days, necessary to ensure the stability of the employment outcome, and the individual no longer needs vocational rehabilitation services;**

**(v) The individual and the qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor employed by the Bureau, at the end of the appropriate period, consider the employment outcome to be satisfactory and agree that the individual is performing well in the employment;**

**(vi) The individual is informed through appropriate modes of communication of the availability of post-employment services; and**

**(vii) Prior to case inactivation, the client has been informed of the decision in writing, with a minimum of ten (10) business days’ notice, supplemented as necessary by other appropriate modes of communication consistent with the informed choice of the individual. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must provide the individual with information on the appeals options and services available from the Client Assistance Program and how to contact that program; or**

**(viii) The youth has transitioned to extended services provided with funds other than those from the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of the Bureau; and**

**(ix) The individual is no longer receiving any other vocational rehabilitation service from the Bureau.**

**For purposes of this policy the following definitions shall apply:**

**Extended Services means ongoing support services**

**and other appropriate services that are:**

**(i) Needed to support and maintain an individual with**

**a most significant disability including a youth with a most significant disability, in supported employment;**

**(ii) Organized or made available, singly or in**

**combination, in such a way as to assist an eligible**

**individual in maintaining supported employment;**

**(iii) Based on the needs of an eligible individual,**

**as specified in an Individualized Plan for Employment;**

**(iv) Provided by a State agency, a private nonprofit**

**organization, employer, or any other appropriate resource, after an individual has made the transition from support from Vocational Rehabilitation Program of the Bureau; and**

**(v) Provided to a youth with a most significant**

**disability by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of the Bureau for a period not to exceed four years, or at such time that a youth reaches age 25, whichever comes first.**

**Short-Term Basis means, for purposes of supported employment, an individual with a most significant disability, whose supported employment in an integrated setting does not satisfy the criteria of competitive integrated employment, is considered to be working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment so long as the individual can reasonably anticipate achieving competitive integrated employment:**

**(i) Within six months of achieving a supported employment outcome; or**

**(ii) In limited circumstances, within a period not to exceed 12 months from the achievement of the supported employment outcome, if a longer period is necessary based on the needs of the individual, and the individual has demonstrated progress toward competitive earnings based on information contained in the service record.**

**The six-month short-term basis period, and the additional six months that may be available in limited circumstances, begins after an individual has completed up to 24 months of supported employment services (unless a longer period of time is necessary based upon the individual’s needs) and the individual has achieved a supported employment outcome, meaning that the individual is stable in the supported employment placement for a minimum period of 90 days following the transition to extended services. At this point, the individual has achieved a supported employment outcome.\***

**[Policy**

**In addition to the following, please see the guidelines in Chapter 3, Section 7, "Case Closure without an Eligibility Determination (Status 08)".**

**An individual's case may be closed if:**

**1) the person has no disability, no substantial impediment to employment, or the individual does not require Vocational Rehabilitation services to achieve an employment outcome. This type of closure would require:**

**a. An opportunity for the individual's, or their representative's, participation in the closure decision.**

**b. Written notification of the closure decision.**

**c. Written notification of appeal rights, including the name and address of the person with whom an appeal may be filed, and of the availability of the Client Assistance Program.**

**d. Certification of Ineligibility in case record that documents the reasons for closure and is dated and signed by the Counselor.**

**e. Referral to other agencies and community rehabilitation programs as appropriate.**

**f. Review of the ineligibility determination within twelve (12) months. A review is not required in situations where the individual refuses it, the individual is no longer present in the state, the individual's whereabouts are unknown, or the individual's medical condition is rapidly progressive.**

**2) there is clear and convincing evidence after a trial work period and/or extended evaluation or after a period of service provision under an IPE, that the individual with a disability is unable to benefit from VR services due to the significance of disability in terms of achieving an employment outcome. This type of closure would require:**

**a. An opportunity for an individual's, or their representative's, participation in the closure decision.**

**b. Written notification of closure decision.**

**c. Written notification of appeal rights, including the name and address of the person with whom an appeal may be filed, and of the availability of the Client Assistance Program.**

**d. Review of the ineligibility determination within twelve (12) months. A review is not required in situations where the individual refuses it, the individual is no longer present in the state, the individual's whereabouts are unknown, or the individual's medical condition is rapidly progressive.**

**e. Certification of Ineligibility in the case record that documents the reasons for closure and is dated and signed by the Counselor.**

**f. Referral to other agencies and community rehabilitation programs as appropriate.]**

**(c) Closed Rehabilitated (Status 26)**

**Cases closed as rehabilitated must, at a minimum, have been declared eligible, have received appropriate diagnostic and related services, have had a program for vocational rehabilitation services formulated, have completed the program insofar as possible, have been provided counseling as an essential rehabilitation service, and have achieved an employment outcome for a minimum of 90 days after the completion of substantial services.**

**Policy**

**An individual is determined to have achieved an employment outcome only if the following requirements are met:**

**(a) The provision of services under the individual's IPE has contributed substantially to the achievement of the employment outcome.**

**(b) The employment outcome is consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.**

**(c) The employment outcome is in an integrated setting, consistent with the individual's informed choice.**

**(d) The individual has maintained the employment outcome for a period of at least ninety (90) days after the completion of substantial services.**

**(e) At the end of the appropriate period, under paragraph (d) of this section, the individual and the rehabilitation counselor consider the employment outcome to be satisfactory and agree that the individual is performing well on the job.**

**Procedures**

**Criteria for Closing Cases as Rehabilitated (Status 26)**

**When an individual is determined to be rehabilitated, such individual must have been, at a minimum: (a) provided an evaluation of rehabilitation potential and counseling and guidance as essential vocational rehabilitation services, (b) provided appropriate vocational rehabilitation services in accordance with the Individualized Plan for Employment or amendments, and (c) determined to have achieved an employment outcome which has been maintained for a period of not less than 90 days after the completion of substantial services.**

**The case record must specifically reflect the degree to which the requirements for determining an individual as rehabilitated have been met, including follow up to assure suitability of employment and post-employment services to those individuals who require such services to the extent necessary to maintain an employment outcome.**

**A. Evaluation of Rehabilitation Potential and Counseling and Guidance**

**In every instance, an evaluation must have been performed resulting in a determination that the individual met eligibility criteria.**

**Counseling and guidance are considered essential vocational rehabilitation services throughout the case process. These services must be provided in every case, although the extent will vary depending upon the needs and complexities of each situation.**

**B. Appropriate Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

**Through the evaluation process and the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment, a vocational goal and services to achieve the goal are jointly determined. Unless some complications arise, the client completes this original program of services and is placed in employment consistent with the established goal for which the services have prepared the individual.**

**At times, however, because of a variety of factors, the considered decision of the Counselor and client may be that it is necessary, or more suitable, to modify the vocational goal and/or the program of services. This decision necessitates amendments to the IPE. In all situations, there must be a relationship between the services and vocational outcome (i.e., services should be necessary and have a positive effect on the individual's preparation for or placement in employment).**

**The service also should be substantial. A substantial service is defined as any vocational rehabilitation service provided within a counseling and guidance relationship that contributes in an identifiably positive way to the rehabilitation of that individual. Counseling and guidance are expected to be present in all cases. The substantiality of the service can best be determined by its contribution to, or effect on, the individual's vocational rehabilitation, not on arbitrary policies based upon a fixed number or amount of services, expenditures, counseling hours, contacts with the client, etc., although such factors may serve as good indicators. In essence, services must have a discernible impact on the individual's employability.**

**Where facts in a given case do not support the appropriateness of vocational rehabilitation services or the contribution of services to the ultimate employment of the client, the case should be closed not rehabilitated (Status 28).**

**Case Records of Individuals Determined to be Rehabilitated**

**The case record must document that VR:**

**(a) found the individual eligible;**

**(b) provided an assessment for eligibility and determining vocational rehabilitation needs;**

**(c) provided counseling and guidance;**

**(d) provided appropriate and substantial vocational rehabilitation services in accordance with the IPE, and the services contributed to the achievement of the employment outcome;**

**(e) determined that the client has maintained an employment outcome for at least ninety (90) calendar days after the completion of substantial services;**

**(f) provided an opportunity for the individual's involvement in the closure decision;**

**(g) reassessed the need for and informed the client of the purpose and availability of post-employment services, when necessary;**

**(h) provided written notification of closure to the client;**

**(i) demonstrated that the individual achieved a successful vocational outcome to the extent possible in competitive employment in the most integrated setting possible, consistent with the individual's informed choice;**

**(j) demonstrated that the employment outcome is consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice;**

**(k) demonstrated that at the end of the ninety (90) days of substantial services during the employment, the individual and the Rehabilitation Counselor mutually consider the employment outcome to be satisfactory and agree that the individual is performing well on the job.**

**Additional Requirements for Case Records of Individuals in Supported Employment**

**(a) extended support services are immediately available to preclude any interruption in the provision of the ongoing support needed to maintain employment;**

**(b) the individual has achieved earnings at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled and has maintained employment for at least ninety (90) days after the completion of substantial services and the transition to extended services; and**

**[(c) for individuals closed working in a temporary transitional employment (TEP) placement, the extended support services must include continuous job placements until job permanency is achieved.**

**(d) Homemaking Closure (Status 26)**

**Policy**

**Homemaking may be established as the vocational goal if the client will be personally performing the major portion of homemaker tasks necessary for maintaining a home for the family or for themselves. Homemaking may be an appropriate occupation for any client, depending on his or her individual needs and circumstances. It is not restricted to those individuals who had previously functioned as homemakers, but also includes individuals for whom a change in vocational goal to homemaking is determined to be the most suitable outcome based upon their interests and informed choice.**

**Family status and earnings are not conditions of closure for the homemaker, nor are other factors such as the expectation that the rehabilitation of the homemaker will free another family member to engage in competitive employment. While such results are desirable, they constitute secondary gains upon which closure is not contingent. However, in order to receive vocational rehabilitation services leading to an employment outcome of homemaker, the following two special conditions must apply:**

**1) The homemaker must either be a person with no other alternative caregiver to assume the home management tasks, or be a person who is solely responsible for child care responsibilities at least 8 hours per day.**

**2) If either of these two criteria are met, then the client must require Vocational Rehabilitation Services to acquire or reacquire the ability to assume primary responsibility for the safe performance of at least four of the following seven homemaker tasks:**

**Cooking**

**Cleaning**

**Paying Bills**

**Reading Mail**

**Grocery Shopping**

**Home repairs**

**Laundry**

**A Circumstances which require special consideration when justifying homemaking as a placement goal:**

**1) Individuals living alone**

**Individuals with no family would have to be, or have the potential to be, reasonably self-sufficient in their self-care to have a vocational objective of homemaking. These individuals may be considered as homemakers, but it may be more difficult to justify a homemaking goal for them than for others who perform homemaking activities in support of a family.**

**a) Self-care versus homemaking activities**

**The case record must distinguish between the particular activities involved with self-care and those involved with homemaking to support homemaking as a suitable objective. To do this, the Counselor should list the individual's homemaking activities which he or she performs or would like to perform, to maintain a suitable living environment (meal preparation, housecleaning chores, laundry, etc.).**

**Teaching activities involved with daily living, may of necessity, precede or coincide with teaching homemaking activities.**

**2) Individuals whose vocational goal is changed to homemaking during the VR process**

**The criteria for successfully attaining a homemaking closure do not prohibit this kind of closure in situations where the rehabilitation services may have been directed toward another vocational goal. But the validity of these closures depends on whether the particular circumstances involved with the case meets the applicable criteria.**

**a) Criteria for homemaking closures:**

**1) The individual must be performing homemaking activities to support that he or she is actually doing the homemaker tasks. If there are others in the same household also performing homemaking activities, it must be determined that the individual has the primary responsibility for the performance of no fewer than four of the seven homemaker tasks identified in these policies.**

**2) The case record must show that substantial VR services were provided and how they contributed significantly to the individual's ability to perform homemaker tasks.**

**3) It must be shown that the homemaking activities render a significant contribution to the home.**

**4) The individual's actual performance of homemaking activities can be described as productive.**

**5) Homemaking activities are distinct and separate from other work activities which can be performed by an unpaid family worker employed on a family farm or in a family business.**

**Procedures**

**1. The eligibility determination for an individual whose prospective vocational goal is that of a homemaker is essentially the same process as for all other applicants for VR services. The Counselor must first determine whether the disabling condition presents a significant impediment to employment.**

**In order to consider whether the vocational goal of homemaker is feasible, the Counselor together with the client, must determine whether the client can be expected, as a result of service provision, to meet the occupational qualifications of homemaker.**

**A homemaker inventory checklist must be completed either by the Counselor, or if appropriate, the Rehabilitation Teacher after evaluating the client's specific impediments related to four or more of the homemaker activities. A specific service plan should then be developed to identify the resources, adaptive devices, and training needed. This homemaker inventory is necessary to support the development of an IPE with the goal of homemaker.**

**1. Prior to submission of case closure in Status 26, the Counselor or, if appropriate, the Rehabilitation Teacher, should complete a summary training report that identifies the gains the client has achieved in four or more homemaker categories as a result of VR services.**

**Information**

**In situations where the individual's ability or inability to perform tasks is not evident and further information is needed, Counselors are encouraged to evaluate the applicant in the home situation. In addition, other authoritative sources may be used. These may include Rehabilitation Teachers, mobility instructors, Rehabilitation Technologists, and low vision providers, among others.**

**A homemaker is generally an individual who maintains a home for other family members, as well as himself or herself. In some cases, an individual living alone may be considered for services leading to a homemaker outcome if the criteria above are met.**

**A case may be closed as homemaker even though the vocational goal and rehabilitation services were directed to other work. The validity of vocational rehabilitation closures in such instances would, however, depend on whether substantial services were provided and the decision to change to the goal of homemaker was the choice of the client. In such cases, it must be shown that at least four of the seven essential homemaking duties are being performed by the individual, and that the individual satisfies the other requirements noted in these policies for the employment outcome of homemaker to be achieved. In making a determination whether a client may be provided services leading to the vocational goal of homemaker, the Counselor must distinguish between self-care activities and homemaking. Activities considered self-care, rather than homemaking tasks, cannot be the basis for a determination of eligibility as a homemaker. The following are examples of the differentiation between homemaking and self-care activities:**

**Homemaking Duties Self-Care Functions**

**Meal preparation/cooking vs. Eating**

**Laundering clothes vs. Dressing**

**Grocery Shopping vs. Shopping for**

**personal items**

**(e) Unpaid Family Worker Closure (Status 26)**

**Cases may inactivated with this employment outcome if the client has received vocational rehabilitation services that have resulted in the ability to obtain, retain, regain or advance in employment within a family business such as, but not limited to a farm or restaurant, where no payment is received by the individual for hours worked in the business.**

**(f) Supported Employment Closure (Status 26)**

**Cases may be closed with this employment outcome for clients with most significant disabilities if the client is working in an integrated employment setting typically found in the community, with extended support services being provided. The individual will have been found eligible for Supported Employment services (see Section 10). The employment goal will be consistent with the individual’s unique strengths, aptitudes, resources, priorities, and interests. The individual will be working at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled. The client will be working the number of hours that is consistent with their informed choice. The need for extended supports will be of a nature that at least two follow up visits per month are necessary by the provider of extended services to ensure a continued, successful placement. An integrated setting exists when the majority of coworkers are not persons with disabilities and are not paid caregivers. The employment setting must be typically found in the community and the level of integration with nondisabled coworkers must be at the same level that would otherwise be found within the employment setting.**

**(g) Community Rehabilitation Program Closure (Status 26)**

**Cases may no longer be closed with this employment outcome (formerly referred to as Sheltered Employment) after September 30, 2001, based upon changes in federal regulations. For those clients, who through informed choice, desire long-term job placement in community rehabilitation facilities, the Counselor shall initiate a referral to those providers desired by the individual and facilitate access to appropriate funding through other sources where available.**

**For cases with inactivation prior to this date, an employment outcome in a community rehabilitation program will apply if the individual is performing work in a setting where the majority of coworkers also have disabilities. If the individual is compensated for work performed at a rate below the minimum wage, then the employer must be covered under a Special Work Certificate through the Department of Labor. Individuals who are compensated at or above the minimum wage, but who work in a setting where the majority of coworkers are persons with disabilities, shall also be considered to have achieved an employment outcome in a community rehabilitation setting. Persons who are paid caregivers shall not be considered in the determination as to whether the majority of persons at the employment locations are individuals who do not have a disability. In making a determination that employment in a community rehabilitation setting is appropriate and desired by the individual, the Counselor will document the individuals’ specific informed choice to work in a setting that is not integrated.**

**(h) Cases Closed After an Individualized Plan for Employment Was Written and Initiated (Status 28), or Closed After a Determination of Eligibility but Prior to an Individualized Plan for Employment Being Written (Status 30)**

**Cases closed in Status 28 must have been declared eligible, have received appropriate diagnostic and related services, and have had a program for vocational rehabilitation services formulated and initiated, but have not completed the program and/or have not been provided with counseling, and/or have not been determined to be suitably employed for a minimum of 90 days. Cases closed in Status 30 are those cases which, although accepted for vocational rehabilitation services, did not progress to the point that VR services were actually initiated under a rehabilitation plan.**

**Situations will occur which will necessitate closing of a case from Status 10-24 as not rehabilitated. For example, an individual for whom eligibility has been determined, and an Individualized Plan for Employment is being developed, or has been formulated or initiated, may decide not to follow through with a program of services.**

**Criteria for Closing Cases as Not Rehabilitated in Status 28 and 30**

**When the Counselor and client determine that an employment outcome cannot be achieved or that employment resulted without benefit derived from vocational rehabilitation services, the case should be closed in the appropriate category, either Status 28 (closed not rehabilitated after an Individualized Plan for Employment was initiated), or Status 30 (closed not rehabilitated before an Individualized Plan for Employment was initiated).**

**Before such a case is closed, the Counselor should ensure that the individual understands the purpose of the VR program and the services which are available. The client should also be informed that they may reapply for services. The reasons for a client's decision not to proceed with a program of services should be fully recorded. Also, since contact with a client may be lost as a result of a changing residence, sufficient client contact will keep these occurrences at a minimum. In addition, the case record should include additional sources of information for the purpose of locating such persons.**

**In some instances, new information or complications will require the Counselor and the client to reconsider the prospect of the client attaining suitable employment. After such an evaluation, they may determine that employment is not possible. VR services should not, however, be terminated until the Counselor has thoroughly considered all available services, including those from other sources. When, with full participation of the client or clear opportunity for participation, it is determined that suitable employment cannot be obtained, the client should be advised in writing of the case closure action.**

**A decision to close the individual's case should be based upon all facts and circumstances. The case record must reflect procedures which were followed before the case was closed. A Certificate of Ineligibility (if applicable) and a Case Service Report, RSA-911, must be completed.**

**Under circumstances such as those in the preceding paragraph, where referral to another agency appears appropriate, the referral should involve more than merely advising the client to make applications to the other agency. Referral action should include preparing the client for referral, transmittal of essential information to the other agency in accordance with confidentiality policies, and additional assistance which may help meet his or her needs to the maximum extent possible.**

**Moving to Another State**

**Status 28 and 30 closures for the reason "transferred to another state vocational rehabilitation agency" involve clients who are not able to complete their IPE in Connecticut because of moving to another state. In these instances, the following procedures are recommended:**

**1. Upon obtaining a signed release of information from the client, the VR Counselor should immediately contact the VR State Agency in the state of the client's destination, and jointly plan for continuation of the program of services with as little interruption as possible. The client should be provided with the name and address of the vocational rehabilitation office nearest their new residence and instructed to contact that office as soon as possible. A duplicate case record or a summary of the case data and progress of the client's program should be made available at the most appropriate time to the VR State Agency in the state where the client plans to live.**

**The case should be closed in Status 28 or 30 when transition to the other state VR program has occurred, or after the client has been afforded sufficient opportunity to pursue a referral, but has declined to do so.**

**2. The client's case should remain active with the VR Program of BESB, and should not be closed in situations where the client has left Connecticut to pursue an out of state training program consistent with the approved IPE of the individual. In such situations, if the client chooses to seek employment out of state after completion of training, it is appropriate for the Counselor to continue providing services under the IPE until successful completion of the program.**

**No Longer Legally Blind**

**At any time during the rehabilitation process, if a client is found to no longer be classified as legally blind, or have a visual impairment that is progressive and degenerative, or be a client with a visual impairment who was served by the Children’s Services Program of BESB on or after January 1, 2010, they shall be informed of this change in status and be notified that the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) is the Vocational Rehabilitation Program in Connecticut that serves individuals with other disabilities.**

**Clients shall be afforded the opportunity to have their case transferred to BRS, upon receipt of a signed release. The Counselor will make every effort to facilitate a smooth transition to BRS, and the case will be closed after the appropriate written notification has been given to the client.**

**Since these situations do not involve a determination of ineligibility, but rather a transfer to the agency within Connecticut that serves persons with other disabilities, the reason for case closure will be noted as "Transfer to another agency".**

**Refusing Services and Not Cooperating**

**As an equal partner in the vocational rehabilitation process, clients have the right to make informed choices regarding the selection of a vocational goal, the services to be provided and the entities that will be providing the services necessary to achieve an employment outcome. It is the responsibility of the Counselor to provide all relevant information available in order for the client to have the opportunity to make informed choices about services and vendors available. Clients have the right to decline services that are not essential to the achievement of an employment outcome. In circumstances where a client declines to participate in a service that the Counselor views as essential to the achievement of an employment outcome, an opportunity shall be afforded to the client to meet with the supervisory staff of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to review the circumstances and present information related to their decision. The individual shall be informed of the rights and remedies available to them prior to the meeting, including the right to have an advocate or representative of the Client Assistance Program present during the meeting, and the right to pursue mediation, administrative review or hearing before an impartial hearing officer in lieu of, or in addition to meeting with supervisory staff. If the preponderance of information presented at the meeting results in a clear and convincing conclusion by supervisory staff that declining the service will be detrimental to the client achieving an employment outcome and the client continues to decline the service after all available information is provided, then a written decision shall be issued to the client within 30 calendar days informing them of the intent to inactivate their case services based upon refusal of essential services. Such written notification shall be in the clients preferred format and language and include a summary of the findings of the meeting and a description of the rights and remedies available to the individual if they are in disagreement with the decision. Examples of situations where declining a service could result in a significant detriment to the vocational rehabilitation process include circumstances where a person is currently using illegal drugs or abusing alcohol and they decline to participate in a rehabilitative treatment program.**

**Individuals who refuse written requests sent in their preferred format and language to participate in meetings with supervisory staff and who additionally refuse to pursue the rights and remedies available to appeal a Counselor decision, may be inactivated due to lack of cooperation. In such instances, subsequent written notification, provided to the client in their preferred format and language shall be sent, indicating the intent to inactivate case services. The written notification shall include the specific reason(s) for the proposed case inactivation, and detail the rights and remedies available to the individual if they are in disagreement with the decision.]**

**\*e)\* [(i)] Closing Cases from Post-Employment Services**

**(Status \*34,\* 36 \*or 40\*)**

**Cases closed in this category are those cases which, although closed subsequent to the achievement of an employment outcome, require additional services to maintain, regain or advance in employment consistent with the individual's \*unique\* strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, [and] interests \*and informed choice\*. Only clients closed rehabilitated (Status 26) are eligible for post-employment services. [While receiving such services, clients must be placed in Status 32 with an amended IPE developed which outlines the specific post-employment services. The Counselor will need to work with the individual to achieve a satisfactory level of self-sufficiency independent of the post-employment support. It also requires the Counselor's professional judgment with respect to the individual's employment stability.**

**When making such decisions, the following factors should be taken into account:**

**1. Satisfactory remediation of the precipitating problem requiring post-employment services;**

**2. Attainment of sufficient independence to function without continuing post-employment services or a Counselor's professional judgment to discontinue services;**

**3. Employment appears secure as determined by continuing suitable work performance, job satisfaction, and acceptance in the particular employment setting with respect to employee benefits, and opportunities for job development and advancement which are the same as for other employees;**

**4. Employment continues at a suitable level in relation to the individual's potentialities and the particular locality and labor market, or potentialities can be realized by the individual's own initiative; and**

**5. The client's condition or situation becomes such that post-employment services cannot maintain him or her in employment.]**

**\*Status 34: A case is closed in this status from Post-Employment Status 32 when the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is not able to address all of the client’s needs under a Post-Employment IPE and a new determination of eligibility and the provision of the full scope of vocational rehabilitation services would be beneficial.**

**Status 36: A case is closed from Post-Employment Status 32 when all services outlined in the Post-Employment IPE have been completed and services have enabled client to remain successfully employed.**

**Status 40: A case is closed from Post-Employment Status 32 when, after the provision of Post-Employment services, it is determined that vocational rehabilitation services were not sufficient to assist the client in maintaining, regaining or advancing in employment, and the individual is not seeking to reapply for vocational rehabilitation services under a new eligibility determination.\***

**\*f)\* [(j)] Closing Cases for Individuals from \*Underserved Populations\* [Minority Backgrounds] (Status 08, 28 and 30)**

**To ensure equal access to vocational rehabilitation services, in all situations where a person has identified themselves as Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or Hispanic or Latino, the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor shall meet with the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Supervisor to review the circumstances prior to a decision to inactivate case services. Such supervisory review shall confirm that all reasonable efforts were made by the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor to offer full opportunity for participation in services. Examples of documented efforts include (but are not limited to) utilizing interpreter services to address language barriers or community based organizations to assist with outreach to the individual.**

**Section \*14\* [15]. - Post-Employment Services (Status 32)**

**\*a)**  **Post-employment services refers to the provision of one or more vocational rehabilitation services that are provided subsequent to the achievement of an employment outcome and that are necessary for an individual to maintain, regain, or advance in employment, consistent with the individual's**

**unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns,**

**abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.**

**Post-employment services are intended to ensure that the employment outcome remains consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. These services are available to meet rehabilitation needs that do not require a complex and comprehensive provision of services and, thus, should be limited in scope and duration. If more comprehensive services are required, then a new rehabilitation effort should be considered.**

**Post-employment services are to be provided under an amended Individualized Plan for Employment; thus, a redetermination of eligibility is not required. The provision of post-employment services is subject to the same requirements as the provision of any other vocational rehabilitation service, including an exploration and utilization of available comparable services and benefits for those vocational rehabilitation services that require such exploration.**

**b) Post-employment services are available:**

**(1) To assist an individual to maintain employment, such as, but not limited to situations where the individual's employment is jeopardized because the individual requires assistive technology to maintain the employment;**

**(2) To regain employment, such as, but not limited to situations where the individual's job is eliminated through reorganization and new placement services are needed; and**

**(3) To advance in employment, such as, but not limited to situations where the employment is no longer consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.\***

**[Policy**

**Post-employment services are one or more VR services that are provided subsequent to the achievement of an employment outcome, and that are necessary for an individual to maintain, regain or advance in employment, consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests. These services are available to meet vocational rehabilitation needs that do not require a complex and comprehensive provision of services and should be limited in scope and duration. Post-employment services are not intended to advance clients into new careers if the client has already achieved an employment outcome that is consistent with his or her individual strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests. Post-employment services are not intended to replace the process of determining eligibility if new circumstances arise which require comprehensive coordination of services in order to obtain, retain or advance in employment. Post-employment is also not intended to enable clients to obtain upgrades to computer systems that should be otherwise provided by employers under applicable laws.**

**The IPE for each individual shall contain statements concerning:**

**(1) the expected need for post-employment services, based on an assessment during the development of the IPE;**

**(2) a reassessment of the need for post-employment services prior to the determination that the individual has achieved an employment outcome;**

**(3) if appropriate, a statement of how post-employment services shall be provided or arranged through cooperative agreements with other service providers.**

**Procedures**

**The purpose of post-employment services is to provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals previously closed rehabilitated to assist that individual to maintain, regain or advance in other suitable employment. The concept recognizes that an individual may need certain vocational rehabilitation services following rehabilitation to maintain his or her employment and prevent the breakdown of the results of the vocational rehabilitation process.**

**Three criteria have been established for providing post-employment services:**

**1. The client was previously considered to be successfully rehabilitated and inactivated in Status 26;**

**2. Post-employment services are made to help the client maintain, regain or advance in employment; and**

**3. The solution to the client's situation does not require a complex or comprehensive effort which would be handled more appropriately as a reopened case.**

**The need for post-employment services should be identified as soon as possible to insure that previous data and rehabilitation efforts have not lost relevancy and significance for the provision of post-employment services. The duration of post-employment services should be determined on an individual basis as is true for all other vocational rehabilitation services. This can mean in some cases a one-time service, and in other cases, a service or combination of services over a period of time.**

**It would be inconsistent with sound vocational rehabilitation principles, as well as an unnecessary drain on resources, to conclude that all individuals will need or should be provided post-employment services.**

**Decisions to terminate post-employment services should be made on an individual basis in consultation with the individual and recorded as a case narrative.**

**There should be sufficient documentation to justify the need for post-employment services with an explanation why such services are necessary to maintain the individual in employment. An amendment to the IPE developed and maintained under the same principles of client involvement is required. It should contain a description of the type and extent of services planned and how they are provided.**

**Basic Concepts**

**Most post-employment services required by a client are services that VR provides directly or purchases. Counseling and guidance are as essential during the post-employment service period as they are during other phases of the vocational rehabilitation process and constitute the core service provided by the Counselor around which all other post-employment services are provided.**

**Some services, however, required by an individual to maintain himself or herself in employment may not fall within the scope of post-employment services. For example, supportive services such as maintenance, transportation, and attendant care are only permissible as post-employment services in certain circumstances. An example of maintenance which might be considered under post-employment would be food and shelter for an individual while at a facility to have an artificial limb adjusted. Transportation services can be furnished after closure as rehabilitated when its purpose is to enable an individual to participate in other services. The need for transportation and the supportive role of these services for participation in other VR services should be clearly documented. There must be a reasonable correlation between the amount of transportation furnished and the extent of involvement in other services (e.g., continued payment of daily transportation costs while furnishing periodic counseling sessions could not be justified). Transportation cannot be furnished to support an individual in employment after closure since employment in this sense is not a VR service but the goal. While VR cannot provide continuing attendant or homemaker services, specific arrangements for obtaining such services should be included in the post-employment services program for that individual, using other agencies and resources, including those of the client. It is imperative that the Counselor explore and make full use of all resources and benefits available to the client in planning post-employment services, just as is required in planning and providing all of the vocational rehabilitation services that lead to the client's preparation for and placement in employment.**

**a) Limitations on Post-Employment Services**

**Post-employment service allows VR to provide vocational rehabilitation services for a period of time after closure. The period of time when post-employment services may be provided must be determined on an individual basis and on time factors such as: (1) the current validity of previous data, (2) whether previous rehabilitation efforts have lost relevancy or significance, and (3) the continued availability of records.**

**Certain services are by definition supportive in that their purpose and function is to enable an individual to participate in or benefit from other VR services. Transportation and maintenance are two such services which are thus defined in the Regulations. Supportive services must be provided in conjunction with other vocational rehabilitation services. They cannot be used to support an individual in employment since employment is not a vocational rehabilitation service, but instead, it is the goal resulting from vocational rehabilitation services. For example, in order to maintain employment, an individual might be furnished transportation and any necessary maintenance connected with the provision of physical restoration services in contrast to the situation where the individual could not be furnished transportation to and from work nor maintenance because of limited income. Attendant care is also considered a supportive service in the same sense as transportation and maintenance. Attendant care can only be furnished as a post-employment service when an attendant or escort is needed during transportation for the purpose of providing vocational rehabilitation services.**

**b) Other Considerations**

**Comparable Services and Benefits**

**Appropriate and available resources should be fully used in the provision of post-employment services. Post-employment services are exempt from the requirement that VR fully consider comparable services and benefits available under other programs before providing the post-employment service. Such services as counseling, diagnosis, and placement (which normally would not be subject to the comparable benefits requirement) should not be subject to a test when provided as post-employment services. However, when other services which normally require consideration of comparable benefits such as physical or mental restoration or interpreter services are provided as post-employment services, these services should be provided taking cognizance of any comparable benefits (some of which may have been listed in the original IPE) to the extent that they are both appropriate and available.**

**Upgrade**

**Post-employment services should not be provided simply to upgrade an individual's employment status. However, post-employment services may be provided to assist an individual to achieve more suitable employment, especially where a determination of rehabilitation was based on employment which was appropriate at the time, but was below the individual's potential, and when the more suitable employment: (1) is more apt to maintain the individual in employment, (2) is closely related to the existing job and does not entail an extended training period and change of occupation, i.e., has a relatively simple solution, and (3) will significantly improve the level of independence resulting in either a substantial reduction or termination of post-employment services.**

**To properly identify and monitor those clients for whom post-employment services are being provided, use Status 32. Clients who have terminated these services will be placed into Status 36.**

**Requirements**

**1. In the initial IPE, the Counselor must address the potential need for post-employment services.**

**2. When closing a case rehabilitated, the Counselor must reassess and specify any anticipated need for post-employment services in the closure. Clients must be notified of the availability of these services.**

**3. The decision to provide post-employment services or to reopen a case must be based on: (a) the availability of the case record, (b) the validity of previous data, and (c) the fact that needed services do not reflect a complex rehabilitation process or a significant change from the previous IPE.**

**4. Post-employment services must be provided under an amendment to the original IPE.**

**5. The need for rehabilitation technology services should be considered during the development of the post-employment IPE.**

**6. Post-employment services are terminated when the client completes the goal of the IPE, the case is reopened as an applicant for VR services, or the case is closed for other reasons.**

**7. The closure narrative must specify the services provided and whether or not suitable employment was maintained or regained.**

**Information**

**Post-employment services should not be construed to mean a complete rehabilitation process or an additional complex effort. If comprehensive services are indicated, a new evaluation and determination of eligibility should be made. Post-employment services are intended to be responsive to previously identified, emergent, or persisting problems, and to supplement the substantial services provided under the original IPE.**

**In providing adaptive services, the Counselor should explore the reasonable accommodation provision of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Rehabilitation Act and its implications for employment, transportation, and housing in regard to comparable services and benefits.]**

**Section \*15\* [16]. \*Semi-annual and\* Annual Review \*of Individuals in Extended Employment and other Employment under Special Certificate Provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.\* [After Case Closure for Clients Found to be Ineligible or for Clients Placed into Extended Employment]**

**a) The Vocational Rehabilitation Program will conduct a semi-annual review and reevaluation for the first two years of such employment and annually thereafter for an individual with a disability that includes legal blindness or visual impairment:**

**(1) Who has a record of service, as either an applicant or eligible individual under the Vocational Rehabilitation Program; and**

**(2) Who has achieved employment in which the individual is compensated in accordance with section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act; or**

**(3) Who is in extended employment, including those**

**individuals whose record of service is closed while the**

**individual is in extended employment on the basis that the individual is unable to achieve an employment outcome, or that the individual made an informed choice to remain in extended employment.**

**b) For each individual with a disability who meets these criteria, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

 **must:**

**(1) Semi-annually review and reevaluate the status of**

**each individual for two years after the individual's record of services is closed (and annually thereafter) to determine the interests, priorities, and needs of the individual with respect to competitive integrated employment or training for competitive integrated employment;**

**(2) Enable the individual or, if appropriate, the individual's representative to provide input into the review and reevaluation and must document that input in the record of services, with the individual's or, as appropriate, the individual's representative's signed acknowledgment that the review and reevaluation have been conducted; and**

**(3) Make maximum efforts, including identifying and**

**providing vocational rehabilitation services, reasonable accommodations, and other necessary support services, to assist the individual in engaging in competitive integrated employment.\***

**[Policy**

**Cases that are closed as ineligible must be reviewed within 12 months after closure, unless the individual has refused the review, is no longer in the state, the individual's whereabouts are unknown or the individual has a rapidly progressive and degenerative disease or medical condition. Those clients found ineligible for services must have their cases reviewed within 12 months after closure, and annually thereafter, if requested by the individual or their representative.**

**Those individuals closed in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program must be reviewed at least annually, for a period of two years after case inactivation of such employment and annually thereafter, unless the individual, their guardian or authorized representative decline the review.**

**The results of such review shall be in written format, signed by the client, guardian or authorized representative, and be maintained in the individual’s case record of services.**

**Procedures**

**Cases Closed as Ineligible**

**1. For such cases, a review of the determination must be made within twelve months of the case closure. The Counselor must inform the client in writing of the review. Reviews are not required if the individual is no longer in the state, their whereabouts are unknown, the individual has a rapidly progressive and degenerative disease or medical condition, or the individual had previously informed the Counselor of not being interested in an annual review.**

**2. Based on information obtained from the client and/or other sources, a determination must be made as to whether services are now likely to be beneficial. The client must be given an opportunity for full consultation in the reconsideration of the decision. When there is an indication that the client may now be able to benefit from services, the case should be reopened and a redetermination of eligibility should be completed.**

**3. If a review indicates that the individual's condition is still too significant to benefit from Bureau services, this decision should be discussed with the individual or their representative, prior to sending it in writing. This may be a sensitive matter and should be handled accordingly.**

**4. Only one Bureau-generated review will be performed in these cases. Subsequent reviews are required only when requested by the client or their authorized representative.**

**Clients Closed in Extended Employment**

**For all individuals closed in extended employment settings in a community rehabilitation program (including a workshop), their cases must be reviewed and reevaluated, at least annually for a period of two years, regarding their status to determine the interests, priorities, and needs of the individual for employment or training for competitive employment in an integrated setting in the labor market.**

**Such a review must:**

**1. Be signed by the individual and provide for input into the review and re-evaluation by the individual with a disability, or, if appropriate, a parent, a family member, a guardian, an advocate, or an authorized representative of the individual, if the individual requests, desires, or needs assistance;**

**2. Provide for maximum efforts, including the identification of vocational rehabilitation services, reasonable accommodations, and other support services, to enable such an individual to benefit from training or to be placed into employment in an integrated setting; and**

**3. Provide for services designed to promote movement from extended employment to integrated, competitive employment, including supported employment, independent living, and community participation.**

**4. Be filed in the client’s case record of services.]**

**\*Section 16. Sub-Minimum Wage Requirements**

**a) Documentation Requirements**

**(1) The Bureau, in consultation with the State educational agency, has established a process to document the completion of the required actions regarding youth with a disabilities that includes legal blindness or visual impairment, as well as a process for the transmittal of that documentation from the educational agency to the Bureau, consistent with confidentiality requirements of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.**

**(A) Such documentation must, at a minimum, contain**

**the:**

**(i) Youth’s name;**

**(ii) Determination made, including a summary of the**

**reason for the determination, or description of the service or activity completed;**

**(iii) Name of the individual making the determination**

**or the provider of the required service or activity;**

**(iv) Date determination was made or required service or activity was completed;**

**(v) Signature of the Bureau or educational personnel making the determination or documenting completion of the required services or activity;**

**(vi) Date of signature;**

**(vii) Signature of Bureau’s personnel transmitting documentation to the youth with a disability;**

**and**

**(viii) Date and method (e.g., hand-delivered, faxed,**

**mailed, e-mailed, etc.) by which the document was transmitted to the youth.**

**(2) In the event a youth with a disability or, as applicable, the youth’s parent or guardian, refuses, through informed choice, to participate in the required activities, such documentation must, at a minimum, contain the:**

**(i) Youth’s name;**

**(ii) Description of the refusal and the reason for such refusal;**

**(iii) Signature of the youth or, as applicable, the youth’s parent or guardian;**

**(iv) Signature of the Bureau or educational personnel documenting the youth’s refusal;**

**(v) Date of signatures; and**

**(vi) Date and method (e.g., hand-delivered, faxed,**

**mailed, e-mailed, etc.) by which documentation was**

**transmitted to the youth.**

**(3) The Bureau will retain a copy of documentation with the record of services of the individual in the case management system. Additionally, the Bureau will provide documentation of completion of the transition services, as documented and provided to the Bureau by the appropriate school official, to the youth with a disability within 45 calendar days after the determination or completion of the required activity or service by the local education agency, or**

**90 calendar days, if additional time is necessary**

**due to extenuating circumstances, such as extended illness, family emergency or natural disaster. When transmitting documentation of the final determination or activity completed, the Bureau must provide a cover sheet that itemizes each of the documents that have been provided to the youth. If the youth or their guardian has refused to participate in the required action or service, then the documentation must be provided within 10 calendar days of the youth’s refusal to participate.**

**b) Vocational Rehabilitation Program Responsibilities Prior to Youth with Disabilities Starting Subminimum Wage Employment**

**(1) Prior to a youth with a disability that includes legal blindness or visual impairment entering into sub-minimum wage employment, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program must provide youth with documentation upon the completion of the following actions:**

**(A) Pre-Employment Transition Services, or Transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;**

**(B) Application for vocational rehabilitation services;**

**(C) Eligibility or Ineligibility determination;**

**(D) If the youth was found eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, an approved Individualized Plan for Employment that must include a specific employment goal consistent with competitive integrated employment, including supported or customized employment;**

**(E) Subsequent determination of ineligibility if the youth with a disability was unable to achieve the employment outcome specified in the Individualized Plan for Employment, despite working toward the employment outcome with reasonable accommodations and appropriate supports and services, including supported employment services and customized employment services, for a reasonable period of time; and**

**(F) Closure of the record of services.**

**(2) The youth must receive career counseling, and information and referrals from the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to Federal and State programs and other resources in the individual’s geographic area that offer employment-related services and supports designed to enable the individual to explore, discover, experience, and attain competitive integrated employment. The career counseling and information and referral services must:**

**(A) Be provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program in a manner that facilitates informed choice and decision-making by the youth, or the youth’s representative as appropriate;**

**(B) Not be provided by an entity that offers sub-minimum wage employment, and such employment-related services are not compensated at a sub-minimum wage and do not directly result in employment compensated at a sub-minimum wage provided by such an entity; and**

**(C) Be provided within 30 calendar days of a determination for a youth known by the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to be seeking employment at sub-minimum wage. Transmittal of such documentation must include:**

**(i) Youth’s name;**

**(ii) Summary of the service or activity completed;**

**(iii) Name of the individual or the provider of the required service or activity;**

**(iv) Date the required service or activity was completed;**

**(v) Signature of the Bureau personnel documenting completion of the required services or activity;**

**(vi) Date of signature;**

**(vii) Signature of Bureau’s personnel transmitting documentation to the youth with a disability;**

**and**

**(viii) Date and method (e.g., hand-delivered, faxed,**

**mailed, e-mailed, etc.) by which document was transmitted to the youth.**

**(3) For purposes of this policy, a reasonable period of time must be consistent with the disability-related and vocational needs of the individual, as well as the anticipated length of time required to complete the services identified in the Individualized Plan for Employment. For an individual whose specified employment goal is in supported employment, such reasonable period of time is up to 24 months, unless under special circumstances the individual and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor jointly agree to extend the time to achieve the employment outcome identified in the Individualized Plan for Employment.**

**c) Local Educational Agency Responsibilities Prior**

**to Youth with Disabilities Starting Sub-minimum Wage**

**Employment**

**When a local educational agency becomes aware of a youth with disabilities that includes legal blindness or visual impairment within their school district who is known to be seeking subminimum wage employment, the local educational agency must provide the Bureau with documentation that the youth has received transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The documentation must be provided to the Bureau in a manner that complies with confidentiality requirements of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.**

**The documentation of completed services or activities must, at a minimum, contain the:**

**(1) Youth’s name;**

**(2) Description of the service or activity completed;**

**(3) Name of the provider of the required service or activity;**

**(4) Date the required service or activity was completed;**

**(5) Signature of the educational personnel documenting completion of the required service or activity;**

**(6) Date of signature;**

**(7) Signature of the educational personnel transmitting documentation to the Bureau; and**

**(8) Date and method (e.g., hand-delivered, faxed,**

**mailed, e-mailed, etc.) by which the document was transmitted to the Bureau.**

**In the event a youth with a disability or, as applicable, the youth’s parent or guardian, refuses, through informed choice, to participate in the required transition activities, such documentation must, at a minimum, contain the:**

**(1) Youth’s name;**

**(2) Description of the refusal and the reason for such refusal;**

**(3) Signature of the youth or, as applicable, the youth’s parent or guardian;**

**(4) Signature of the educational personnel documenting the youth’s refusal;**

**(5) Date of signatures**

**(6) Signature of the educational personnel transmitting the documentation of the refusal to the Bureau; and**

**(7) Date and method (e.g., hand-delivered, faxed,**

**mailed, e-mailed, etc.) by which documentation was**

**transmitted to the Bureau.**

**The educational personnel must transmit this documentation to the Bureau as soon as possible upon the completion of each of the required actions, but no later than:**

**(1) 30 calendar days after the completion of the required activity or service; or**

**(2) 60 calendar days, if additional time is necessary**

**due to extenuating circumstances, such as extended illness, family emergency or natural disaster, after the completion of each of the required actions, or**

**(3) Within 5 calendar days if the youth, or their parent or guardian has refused to participate in a required action.**

 **When the educational personnel transmits the last**

**documentation to the Bureau regarding the required services provided to the youth, the educational personnel must provide a cover sheet that itemizes the documentation that has been provided to the Bureau regarding that youth. The educational agency must retain a copy of all documentation provided to the Bureau.**

**d) Vocational Rehabilitation Program Responsibilities to Individuals with Disabilities During Sub-minimum Wage Employment**

**Regardless of age, individuals with legal blindness, (or visual impairment if served by the Bureau’s Children’s Services Program on or after January 1, 2010), who are known by the Bureau to be employed at a sub-minimum wage must be provided career counseling and information and referral services, or these services must be provided to the individual’s representative as appropriate.**

**The career counseling and information and referral services must be provided in a manner that is understandable to the individual with a disability, and that facilitates independent decision-making and informed choice as the individual makes decisions regarding opportunities for competitive integrated employment and career advancement, particularly with respect to supported employment, including customized employment. The career counseling and information and referral services may include benefits counseling, particularly with regard to the interplay between earned income and income-based financial, medical, and other benefits.**

**Upon a referral of an individual with legal blindness or visual impairment to the Bureau by an entity that is paying sub-minimum wages and that has fewer than 15 employees, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program must also inform the individual within 30 calendar days of the referral by the entity, of self-advocacy, self-determination, and peer mentoring training opportunities available in the community.**

**These services must not be provided by an entity that provides sub-minimum wages to employees.**

**For individuals hired at sub-minimum wage on or after July 22, 2016, these required services must be carried out once every six months for the first year of the individual's sub-minimum wage employment and annually thereafter for the duration of such employment. For individuals already employed at sub-minimum wage prior to July 22, 2016, the required services must be carried out once by July 22, 2017, and annually thereafter for the duration of such employment. The applicable intervals will be calculated based upon the date the individual becomes known to the Bureau.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Program must provide documentation to the individual as soon as possible, but no later than:**

**(1) 45 calendar days after completion of the required**

**activities; or**

**(2) 90 calendar days, if additional time is necessary**

**due to extenuating circumstances, such as extended illness, family emergency or natural disaster, after the completion of the required actions.**

**Such documentation must, at a minimum, contain the:**

**(1) Name of the individual;**

**(2) Description of the service or activity completed;**

**(3) Name of the provider of the required service or activity;**

**(4) Date required service or activity was completed;**

**(5) Signature of individual documenting completion of the required service or activity;**

**(6) Date of signature;**

**(vii) Signature of the Bureau personnel transmitting the documentation to the individual with a disability; and**

**(7) Date and method (e.g., hand-delivered, faxed,**

**mailed, e-mailed, etc.) by which the document was transmitted to the individual.**

**In the event an individual with a disability or,**

**as applicable, the individual’s representative, refuses,**

**through informed choice, to participate in the required activities, such documentation must, at a minimum, contain the:**

**(1) Name of the individual;**

**(2) Description of the refusal and the reason for such refusal;**

**(3) Signature of the individual or, as applicable, the individual’s representative;**

**(4) Signature of the Bureau personnel documenting the individual’s refusal;**

**(5) Date of signatures; and**

**(6) Date and method (e.g., hand-delivered, faxed,**

**mailed, e-mailed, etc.) by which documentation was**

**transmitted to the individual.**

**The Bureau must retain a copy of all documentation in the record of services of the individual in the case management system.**

**The Bureau may contract with other entities, such as other public and private service providers, as appropriate, to fulfill these requirements. The contractor providing the services on behalf of the Bureau may not be an entity holding a special wage certificate under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act.**

**e) Review of Documentation**

**The Bureau, or a contractor working directly for the Bureau, is authorized through federal regulations to engage in the review of individual documentation that is maintained by an entity that pays sub-minimum wage to an individual who is legally blind or visually impaired. The contractor may not be an entity holding a special wage certificate under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act.**

**If deficiencies are noted during a documentation review, the Bureau should report the deficiency to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division.\***

**CHAPTER 4 - ADMINISTRATIVE AND EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Section 1. - General Information**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program, as a program administered through the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind, is subject to all policies established by the State of Connecticut and by the Department of Rehabilitation Services. Employees should refer to Total Staff Memos for policies related to topics such as Sexual Harassment, Non-discrimination, AIDS, and for specific policies governing the use of state equipment. Employees should maintain a file of Agency policies.**

**In addition to the policies established by the State of Connecticut for all employees and those policies established by the Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind, the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program, as a federal grant recipient, is required to maintain specific policies as outlined in the following sections of this chapter.**

**Section 2. - Lobbying**

**[Policy]**

**No federal appropriated funds may be used by any member of the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program (including funding for salaries) for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the making of any Federal Grant, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal grant or cooperative agreement.**

**If funds, other than federal funds, are used by any employee of the Program to participate in lobbying activities, full disclosure of this activity must be made to the State Director. The State Director will inform the Federal Government Rehabilitation Services Administration of lobbying activity that occurs by employees of the Program related to any federal grants. No employee should engage in lobbying activities related to federal grants, as described in this section, before consulting with the State Director.**

**Section 3. - Debarment, Suspension, and Other Matters**

**[Policy]**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program is required to inform the Federal Government Rehabilitation Services Administration of any principal administrator of the Program who is debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this Program. Principal staff members of the Program are also required to report if they have been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for commission of fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (Federal, State, or local) transaction or contract under a public transaction; violation of Federal or State antitrust statutes or commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property.**

**Any employee of the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program who has engaged in activities as described in the preceding paragraph must report such activities to the State Director. Employees are further required to report to the State Director if they are under any indictment for, or are otherwise criminally or civilly charged with, the commission of any of the offenses detailed in the preceding paragraphs, or whether they have been subject to a public (Federal, State, or local) transaction that has been terminated for cause of default.**

**Section 4. - Drug-Free Workplace**

**[Policy]**

**Each employee has the right to come to work and perform his or her job in an environment that is free from the illegal use of drugs. It is in the best interest of the State and the public that employees be able to perform their duties safely and efficiently. Safety, health, and efficiency are adversely affected by the illegal use of controlled substances.**

**Employees of the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program are prohibited from the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of controlled substances while on the job or in the workplace. Employees are further prohibited from being under the influence of a controlled substance, not prescribed directly to the employee by a physician, while on the job or in the workplace. Employees found engaging in any of these activities will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.**

**Employees must give written notification to the State Director and to the Personnel Administrator of the Agency within five (5) calendar days of any drug conviction for violation of a criminal drug statute if the violation occurred in the workplace. A conviction means a finding of guilt, including a plea of nolo contendere, or the imposition of a sentence by a judge or jury in any federal or state court.**

**Within ten (10) calendar days of receiving notice that an employee funded through the Vocational Rehabilitation Program has been convicted of a violation of a state or federal drug statute occurring in the workplace, the State Director shall make written notification to the Director of Grants and Contracts Services, U.S. Department of Education, GSA Regional Office.**

**Employees who have substance abuse problems are encouraged to participate in the Employee Assistance Program or a rehabilitation program administered by an approved Federal, State, local health, law enforcement, or other appropriate agency, prior to any disciplinary action. This can be initiated by contacting the Personnel Administrator at the Agency. If an employee chooses not to participate in rehabilitation within a thirty (30) day period after the Agency has received written notification of a conviction, disciplinary action will be taken consistent with collective bargaining agreements and applicable State laws and regulations.**

**A copy of the State policy related to a drug-free work place can be found on the Bureau’s Shared Drive, and is also available through the Personnel Administrator.**

**Section 5. - Cooperative Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding**

**[Policy]**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program seeks to enter into cooperative agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOU) with public and private providers in an effort to increase and improve the services and vocational options for clients of the program. The State Director, in consultation with the Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services will be responsible for the development, negotiation and finalization of all Cooperative Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding with other providers of services that could be of benefit to clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.**

**Section 6. - Comprehensive System of Personnel Development**

**[Policy]**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program seeks to hire and employ the most qualified individuals to provide and coordinate services to clients of the Program. Per Section 361.18 of the federal regulations, all professional and paraprofessional personnel shall be appropriately and adequately prepared and trained \*, including the provision of training** **to ensure that the personnel have a 21st-century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities\* [so that the Program may fulfill its role and functions]. \*The Department of Administrative Services for the State of Connecticut establishes and maintains the job specifications for all job titles utilized by the Bureau. The educational and work experience requirements are included within each job specification.\* Staff members hired into or working in the position of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor or Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Coordinator must meet the “highest standard in the state” for credentialing. In order to meet this standard, the employee needs to have a Master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling or a closely related field and at least one year of professional work experience in rehabilitation counseling, vocational adjustment counseling or job placement for persons with disabilities. [For staff members hired into this job classification prior to the revision of educational standards, a plan of development will be implemented to ensure timely attainment of a Master’s degree that satisfies the scope of this policy. In order to facilitate the attainment of this standard, with prior approval, subject to all relevant State of Connecticut policies and collective bargaining agreements, the Agency may grant incumbents of this job classification up to seven hours per work week to attend college courses that result in earned credits toward this educational requirement. Distance learning options, utilizing intensive classroom instruction combined with internet based training may also be approved when the total contact hours per semester are comparable to the cumulative total hours of granted leave using traditional classroom programs.]**

**The \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* [VR] Program further supports and strongly encourages employees who perform vocational rehabilitation caseload activities \*at the Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor level\* [or who directly oversee and/or review the work of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors] to work toward achievement of credentialing that meets the highest standard of a Master’s degree in rehabilitation or a closely related field. [This includes staff members in the positions of Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor, Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, Rehabilitation Teacher I and II, and Quality Control Reviewer.] No employee shall be granted the authority to make a determination of eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation Services, [or] approval of an Individualized Plan for Employment \*, or a determination of case inactivation\* unless they meet the criteria for the “highest standard in the state”. [With prior approval, subject to all relevant State of Connecticut policies and collective bargaining agreements, the Agency may grant incumbents in these job classifications up to seven hours per week to attend college courses that result in earned credits toward this educational standard. Distance learning options, utilizing intensive classroom instruction combined with internet based training may also be approved when the total contact hours per semester are comparable to the cumulative total hours of granted leave using traditional classroom programs.]**

**Professional development opportunities shall also be provided to staff members \*of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program\* [of other job classifications of the Program] when such opportunities will have a direct benefit to the mission of the Bureau. \*Training and conference opportunities will be offered to staff within available funding, and consistent with state personnel regulations and policies and collective bargaining agreements. Employees may also apply to utilize workshop and conference funds, and tuition reimbursement funds available through collective bargaining agreements to cover the cost of training and related travel expenses when such funds are available.\* [Where it is determined that pursuit of higher education training is necessary for this purpose, with prior approval and subject to all relevant State of Connecticut policies and collective bargaining agreements, staff members may be granted up to seven hours per week to attend college courses that result in earned credits. Distance learning options, utilizing intensive classroom instruction combined with internet based training may also be approved when the total contact hours per semester are comparable to the cumulative total hours of granted leave using traditional classroom programs.**

**Except in extenuating circumstances, as approved in advance by the Director of the Program, or other authorized managerial staff member, in situations of higher education training, full exploration of alternative funding, such as collective bargaining tuition reimbursements shall occur prior to using agency funding.]**

**\*The vocational rehabilitation services portion of the Unified State Plan for Connecticut describes the procedures and activities the Bureau undertakes to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation personnel, including professionals and paraprofessionals, for the Bureau.**

**The State Rehabilitation Council participates in the development of plans and policies necessary to meet the requirements of the vocational rehabilitation section of the Unified State Plan.\***

**[Procedure**

**Any staff member working in the job series of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor who does not have a Master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling or a closely related field will work with their supervisor to implement a plan of development that will result in the necessary degree within a three year timeframe. Additionally, staff members in the job series of Vocational Rehabilitation Assistant Counselor, Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, Rehabilitation Teacher I or II and Quality Control Reviewer shall be strongly encouraged to obtain a Master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a closely related field. In considering educational options, the Supervisor will ensure that the program of study meets all CORE requirements identified by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification. For staff members who have a Master’s degree in a field of study that is not closely related, the Supervisor will consider options, such as attainment of graduate credits in counseling, personal or vocational adjustment, medical or psychological aspects of disability, job development or placement of persons with disabilities, assessment or research techniques, in combination with direct supervision from a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) in order to ensure the staff member achieves the “highest standard”. A staff member will be designated as a “qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor” when, through a combination of education, and/or direct supervision from a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor they are able to meet at least one category of eligibility for the CRC examination. While it is encouraged that staff members obtain the designation of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor through successful completion of the CRC examination, this is not a requirement to achieve the “highest standard”.**

**Through distance learning programs, developed in consultation with Regional Continuing Educational Programs (RCEP) as authorized by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), options to obtain a Master’s degree in nontraditional methods may also be considered. These programs combine intensive, compressed training modules on campus with distance learning assignments. Direct classroom instruction is typically offered in blocks of 5 to 7 consecutive full days, with home study assignments in between quarterly classroom training. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program supports and encourages attendance in the nontraditional Master’s programs and will consider attendance at these programs to be within the scope of the job functions and duties of staff members who are working to achieve the highest standard in the state, subject to obtaining prior approval through the agency to participate in such programs of study.**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Program will use In-Service Training Grant funds when available to facilitate the educational development of staff members. In all instances, the staff person must first meet with their supervisor to obtain approval to attend classes or training programs that would necessitate either the expenditure of VR funds or the need to have time away from work. The Supervisor and employee will discuss options that have the least amount of impact on time requirements away from casework activities. Except in extenuating circumstances, approved in advance by the Director of the Program or other appropriate managerial level staff person, the employee will first make written application for funding through their collective bargaining unit prior to seeking VR funding for higher education coursework. Upon providing written documentation of application for collective bargaining funds, VR funds will be committed to cover any difference in the cost of attending the educational program of study. In the event that collective bargaining funds are denied based on unavailability, the VR Program will cover the remaining balance of educational expenses, upon the employee providing written documentation. In all situations where an employee desires to utilize work hours to participate in higher education, managerial approval shall be obtained prior to participation.**

**The employee will be required to obtain passing grades in order to receive VR funding for educational expenses.**

**Professional development conferences, workshops and seminars directly related to the mission and purpose of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program may be approved at a supervisory level, subject to the availability of In-Service training grant funds, and shall not require prior application for collective bargaining funds, unless they are readily available.]**

**Section 7. - Reversion to Donor**

**[Policy]**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program shall not accept donations that set forth as a condition, the reversion of the donation back to the donor in any form.**

**A reversion to donor situation exists when it can be established that the donor of a private donation placed conditions or restrictions, expressed or implied, on the expenditure of the donation, requiring that the funds be used in a manner that would benefit the donor, an individual with whom the donor has a close personal relationship, or shares a financial interest.**

**The purpose of this policy is to prevent funds from being channeled back to the original donor with the added benefit of federal or state matching funds.**

**In order for a reversion to donor problem to exist, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program must be in receipt of evidence that such a return of the donation was intended by the donor.**

**Accordingly, if a donor is subsequently awarded a contract or sub grant by the Vocational Rehabilitation [Services] Program under a fair and competitive process, with no evidence that the award was influenced by the donor’s donation, a reversion to donor problem will not be found to exist.**

**Section 8. – Services to Individuals from \*Underserved Populations\* [Minority Backgrounds]**

**[Policy]**

**The Vocational Rehabilitation Program is committed to providing an equal opportunity for individuals from \*underserved populations\* [minority backgrounds] to access the full scope of services that are available. To ensure equal access to all aspects of the Vocational Rehabilitation process, the Program will take the following actions:**

* **Direct service staff of the Program will receive training in cultural diversity on an annual basis.**
* **Information and literature regarding community based resources for specific \*underserved\* [minority] populations will be distributed to Program staff to facilitate access.**
* **The Program will enter into Memoranda of Understanding with community based organizations that serve individuals from \*underserved populations\* [minority backgrounds] to encourage information exchange, referrals to access each other’s services and outreach on topics related to vision loss.**
* **Written materials provided to clients shall be made available to them in their preferred mode of communication and preferred language.**
* **To the extent possible, and consistent with Affirmative Action hiring goals, the Program shall employ staff members who possess bilingual speaking and writing skills at sufficient levels necessary to address daily service delivery requests for clients who do not communicate in English.**
* **Where staffing levels are not sufficient to ensure the immediate capacity to respond to inquiries from individuals who do not communicate in English, the Program shall contract with agencies and organizations that provide interpreter services in the preferred language of the individuals.**

**In all situations where a person has identified himself or herself as Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or Hispanic or Latino, the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor shall meet with the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Supervisor to review the circumstances prior to a decision to inactivate case services where an employment outcome has not been achieved. Such supervisory review shall confirm that all reasonable efforts were made by the \*Vocational Rehabilitation\* Counselor to offer full opportunity for participation in services. Examples of documented efforts include (but are not limited to) utilizing interpreter services to address language barriers or community based organizations to assist with outreach to the individual.**

**\*Section 9. – Electronic Communications and Use of Social Media with Clients of the Bureau**

**\*Clients of the Bureau may choose to use or not to use electronic communications to interact with staff to supplement in-person meetings. Examples of electronic communications include email, fax, and text messaging. Staff of the Bureau shall inform clients of the potential risks to confidentiality that is inherent in these technologies so that clients can make the best possible informed decisions as to whether or not to use electronic media for communications with staff of the Bureau.**

**While the Bureau has a secure data system that has firewall protections, there is no assurance that once communications leave the email server of the State of Connecticut that the information contained within the email is being received by a secured computer. Therefore, permission should be obtained by the client in advance of initiating the transmission of confidential information through email. Encryption and password protection of transmitted information will add a heightened level of security protection to the communications. Transmittal of passwords should be in a separate email from the communication that contains the password protected document(s). Text messaging should only be used for brief and basic communication such as confirming an appointment date and time, or to notify a client of a change in an appointment time while in the field. Text messaging should not be utilized as a substitute for telephone or in person discussions.**

**It is important that Bureau staff obtain verification of the client’s identify when communicating through email or text messaging. Advanced discussions with the client prior to engaging in the use of electronic communications will enable the staff person to establish whether other individuals have access to the computer, cell phone or tablet device the client uses for electronic communications. Where such scenarios are possible, the Bureau staff person must first establish with the client a methodology for confirming that the communications are not being inappropriately accessed by any other individual not authorized by the client to receive confidential information. Use of code words is one such example of a method for confirming that an email or text message received from a client is truly from the client and not another individual who has access to the device.**

**Where the Bureau staff person is transmitting a confidential email to a client in a situation where other individuals can gain unauthorized access to the information, providing the password directly to the client over a secured telephone line rather than through a follow up email is recommended.**

**Clients should be advised prior to agreeing or offering to use electronic communications that such communications are subject to inclusion in the client’s case record of services.**

**Bureau staff must only use assigned state equipment for such electronic communications. Use of personal devices such as cell phones, tablets, smart phones and computers is not authorized for electronic communications with clients except in emergency situations where no other alternative is immediately available to alert the client of an imminent danger.**

**Clients should receive counseling on the types of available web-based media that can assist with job seeking and professional networking efforts. In providing such counseling, Bureau staff should educate the client to the risks in using such websites, and the ease in which others who frequent the web sites can gain access to posted information. Clients should further be advised to be aware of their social presence on websites that allow for sharing of personal information, photos and the posting of personal opinions. In particular, clients should be alerted that such postings are frequently accessible to a wide range of individuals who utilize the internet and could potentially expose the client to a risk of harm, as well as serving as a potential reflection of the client’s opinions and perspectives on controversial issues, that a prospective employer could gain ready access to.**

**All web-based, chat-room or related communications between staff of the Bureau and clients whom the staff are providing or coordinating services for must be for professional purposes only that are directly connected with the work assignment. Communications should be exclusively on state issued equipment only. Social interactions such as “friending” assigned clients from personal accounts is not allowable. Additionally, staff of the Bureau shall respect the privacy and rights of clients to have a presence on social media and will not seek out information on clients through web-based or social media sites that is not directly related to the provision or coordination of vocational rehabilitation services to assigned clients. Any sharing of information that a client provides to Bureau staff is subject to confidentiality requirements and may not be shared with other entities without a written and signed release of information.\***