

Section 12: Vocation Rehabilitation

Program Purpose

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is an employment program offered through Kansas Rehabilitation Services (KRS) which is part of Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF). It is funded through a matching combination of federal and state dollars (78.7% Federal to 21.3% State funds).

- Vocational Rehabilitation's mission is to help people with disabilities prepare for, find, and keep a job.
- **Permanent, competitive, integrated** employment is the goal for VR. People with disabilities can receive training, education, rehabilitation devices, and other services needed to achieve their employment goal.
- Find local VR offices here:
 - **Website:** <https://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/Pages/MapVR.aspx>
 - **Phone:** 866-213-9079
 - **Address:** KRS Central Office
Rehabilitation Services
Department for Children and Families Administration Building
555 S. Kansas, 3rd Floor
Topeka, KS 66603
Toll-free Customer Service: 1-866-213-9079

Eligibility

Anyone with a disability can access VR, but the services they receive depend on eligibility criteria. To qualify, a person should be interested in competitive, integrated employment and have:

- A physical, mental, learning, or emotional disability,
- A problem getting or keeping a job because of a disability, and
- The need for VR services to help prepare for, get and/or keep a job.

How it works:

- **Apply:** People with disabilities may complete and submit a VR application or contact their local VR office for an appointment with a VR counselor.

- A fillable Application for Vocational Rehabilitation Services can be found here:
https://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/RS/Documents/RS%20Forms/VR%20Application_PDF%20-%20fillable.pdf.
- **Eligibility Determination:** A VR counselor is assigned to review and help the individual with a disability complete the application in an initial interview.
 - Helpful information to document eligibility could include:
 - Medical reports regarding disability
 - School transcripts or past Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
 - Relevant professional reports, or
 - A description of past work experience or resume
 - The VR counselor may help the individual obtain needed documentation.
 - VR counselors may authorize evaluations to better understand an individual's needs.
 - The VR will pay for an evaluation if the evaluation or service was authorized in writing by the VR counselor before it occurs.
- **Develop an Individualized Plan for Employment:** Once eligibility is determined, the VR counselor will work with the individual with a disability to plan and develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) designed to meet their employment goals. The IPE will list the specific employment goal, the timeframe for services, customer responsibilities, and approved service providers.

Services

Services provided are based on the needs of the person with a disability and their employment goal(s). Services may include:

- **Medical examinations:** Examples include general physical, psychological, or other specialist examinations
- **Vocational evaluation** of interests, skills, and abilities for future work
- **Vocational guidance**
- **Career counseling**
- **Physical or mental restoration services:** Examples include mental health counseling, speech therapy, physical therapy, etc.
- **Training:** Universities, colleges, technical schools, apprenticeship programs, on-the-job training, supported employment, etc.

- **Rehabilitation devices:** medical equipment necessary for employment. Examples could include wheelchairs, prosthesis, glasses, etc.
- **Rehabilitation engineering:** Assistance with job site modifications (changing lighting, adapting a telephone, a computer, or a tool, etc.), and training on use of the modified equipment.
- **Job placement**
- **Follow up** after employment to ensure job success

The above is a partial list of services. Other services may be included based on the person with a disability's needs and goals.

IMPORTANT: All services must be listed on the individual's Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE) by the VR counselor and be approved by Kansas Rehabilitation Services (KRS) before they occur to be paid by KRS.

- A person with a disability may be eligible to receive services from VR but may be ineligible for financial assistance for payment of some services and devices if their income is too high.
- The VR counselor may ask the individual to seek "comparable services and benefits" before VR will pay for a service. Examples include applying for a Pell Grant for tuition assistance, using health insurance for a service, or Medicaid for a covered health service before VR pays for the remaining costs.
- VR does follow an "order of selection" where eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities are given priority for services. VR may set up a wait list based on the date of a person's completed application and the severity of their disability if funds cannot keep up with demand during a year.

Assistive Technology Services Covered

The amended Rehabilitation Act (1973) requires that rehabilitation services, rehabilitation engineering, and rehabilitation and assistive technology devices be considered when determining eligibility for VR services. This means the VR program needs to provide:

- A range of rehabilitation technology and assistive technology services on a statewide basis if needed by people with disabilities to get and keep a job. All services must be available regardless of where the person with a disability lives.
- Assistive technology assessment and training services if it appears the individual could benefit from those services in their pursuit of employment.

- Assistive technology services if they are listed on the individual's IPE and approved by KRS for payment **before** the service is received.
 - Technology is exempt from the comparable benefit requirement, but people with disabilities must meet the economic eligibility before VR can authorize and pay for assistive technology services and devices.
- The most common AT services provided in Kansas are AT Initial Assessment, AT Functional Evaluation, AT Training, and AT Technical Assistance.

Assistive Technology Devices Covered

A complete continuum of assistive technology devices may be considered when developing an IPE. Most VR counselors will authorize an AT Assessment or AT Evaluation to determine the most appropriate device(s) needed to achieve a person's employment goals.

- Any type of assistive technology device may be authorized if the individual needs the device(s) for employment.
 - Types of technology authorized may include laptops, tablets, software, handheld and desktop magnification devices, hearing aids, signalers, speech communication devices, memory aids, mobility devices, etc.
- AT Assessments and AT Evaluations reports will provide recommendations of assistive technology devices that will meet the individual's employment needs based on device demonstrations, short-term device borrowing, and input from the individual.
- The VR counselor will review the assistive technology report recommendations. The VR counselor may need to seek authorization from their Program Administrator or Kansas Rehabilitation Services central office staff depending on the cost of the recommended assistive technology devices.
- If a device costs over \$1,999 and is not available through a vendor who is on the State of Kansas State Contract, the evaluator or the individual with a disability may have to obtain three bids to determine the best price.
- Despite a preference for state vendors, a bid may be obtained from regional or local vendors if the individual lives in a rural area that is not close to approved state vendors.

Challenges Obtaining Assistive Technology

- **Time:** The average VR case takes about two years, so it's important to respond to VR counselor's requests for information and eligibility documentation as soon as possible.
- **Large Caseloads:** VR counselors may have large caseloads, so keeping in contact and completing IPE tasks helps keep the case on track.
- **Review:** Assistive technology services and devices authorized on an individual's IPE will be paid for by KRS. However, the length of time to review recommended devices can vary. A longer review process occurs if:
 - A device costs over \$1,999
 - The device cannot be purchased through a state approved vendor; or
 - The device is needed for a type of employment that the VR counselor doesn't know well.

Appeals

If a person with a disability is not satisfied with their services, they should talk about their concerns with their VR counselor.

- If there are still concerns or if the individual would like an additional perspective, they can talk about their concerns with the Program Administrator, the regional supervisor. Most problems can be resolved at this level.
 - Program administrators' contact information is found on this website: https://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/RS/Pages/RS_Program_Administrators.asp
- If there still are concerns, the person may contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP) staff
 - Website: www.drckansas.org or
 - Client Assistance Program
Disability Rights Center (DRC)
www.drckansas.org
- If the dispute is still unresolved, the person may request an administrative review conducted by a KRS supervisor not involved in their case or request an exception from the Commissioner of Kansas Rehabilitation Services.

- Lastly, the person with a disability can submit a fair hearing request conducted by a Fair Hearing Officer. Contact the KRS Commissioner's office to request any of these reviews.
 - Rehabilitation Services
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555 S. Kansas, 3rd Floor
Topeka, KS 66603
Phone: 785-368-7143
Fax: 785-368-7467
TTY: 785-368-7478
Tollfree Customer Service Line: 1-866-213-9079