

**New Jersey
Commission for the Blind & Visually
Impaired**



**Vocational Rehabilitation
Services Handbook**

*Assisting Individuals who are Blind, Vision-Impaired, or Deaf-Blind
Achieve Their Employment Goals*

Opening Doors of Opportunity!

(Revised June 2020)

Welcome to NJ Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired (CBVI)

The NJ Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired (CBVI) is pleased to partner with you in assisting you to achieve your employment goal. CBVI is part of the national public vocational rehabilitation system, a Federal/State partnership that assists people with disabilities to gain or retain employment. This handbook informs you about the process and procedures in our agency related to vocational rehabilitation services, and your rights and responsibilities.

What are Vocational Rehabilitation Services?

The goal of the provision of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) through CBVI is to help individuals with vision loss to prepare for, obtain, retain, or advance in competitive, integrated employment through the provision of such supports as counseling, medical and psychological services, job training and other individualized services.

Who is eligible to receive for Vocational Rehabilitation Services at CBVI?

You may be eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services at CBVI if:

- You have a visual impairment
 - acuity of 20/70 or worse with best correction in the better eye
 - field of vision of 40 degrees or less
 - Rapidly deteriorating vision
- You receive SSI or SSDI due to a visual impairment
- The visual impairment impedes your ability to work
- You need vocational rehabilitation services to work
- There is a reasonable expectation that you will be employed at the end of the vocational rehabilitation process.

Your counselor will assist you in the eligibility process, working collaboratively to obtain a recent eye report to substantiate your visual disability and other information relevant to determining

eligibility. Your counselor will contact you within 60 days from application for services to let you know if you are eligible for services or update you about your eligibility status. We can only establish eligibility for services if we have required documentation. You and your counselor will work collaboratively to make choices about possible services which you will need to determine your eligibility.

What is Informed Choice?

Your counselor will discuss with you the range of services available to you through the vocational rehabilitation program. In addition, your counselor will assist you in gathering information about various career paths that will be in aid in your selection of an employment goal. This information will assist you when you make decisions about employment goals and the services you need to reach that goal.

In every step of your rehabilitation program you have the right to an informed choice, which is a philosophy which is reflected throughout the process from the point of first contact all the way through the completion of services and beyond (including post-employment services). Implementation of informed choice should ensure that you, or if appropriate, your representative, are an active participant in your VR process, makes decisions related to the assessment process and to selection of the employment outcome and the settings in which employment occurs, vocational rehabilitation services, service providers, the settings for service provision and the methods for procuring services. These decisions should be made by providing you, or your representative, with full disclosure of all available information related to all aspects of the vocational rehabilitation process, including potential financial contribution based on the agency's financial needs test and fee schedule, as appropriate.

How do I receive needed services related to achieving my employment goal?

After you have been found eligible for services, you will participate in a vocational assessment to assist you in identifying your employment goal. You and your counselor will work together to develop an

INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT (IPE) that lists your rights, responsibilities and the services you may receive. The IPE also lists your vocational goal, the objectives and services that are required to address your barriers to employment, the funding source(s) identified for each service, vendors selected for each service, and the availability for post-employment services, if required. You have the right, if you chose, to prepare your IPE independently or with the assistance of a family member or advocate. CBVI can also provide technical assistance to you to help you develop all or part of your IPE. Keep in mind the IPE must be jointly signed and agreed to by you and your counselor in whatever approach you choose. Please note that all services must be linked to achieving your employment goal.

A financial needs test is required for some services. It is possible that your financial participation will be required to some extent for specific programs or services such as college tuition or the purchase of assistive technology devices. Your counselor will inform you of the level of financial participation based on the information you provide in the Financial Needs Test.

Your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is your primary point of contact for connecting you to the services that are required to achieve your employment goal, and is your partner in this process. As such, one of your key responsibilities is to maintain in contact with them, and to inform them in a timely manner of any changes to your situation, barriers to your full participation, and any issues that may arise along the way.

What are examples of Vocational Rehabilitation Services offered at CBVI?

1) Independent Living Skills Instruction

The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) may offer you independent living training designed to help individuals who are blind or visually impaired gain the skills of daily living they will need to lead a full and productive life. The Commission provides three general types of assistance or instruction as part of this program:

Activities of Daily Living/Home Management

Rehabilitation Teachers teach home management skills, how to use specialized equipment, and communication skills such as Braille. The goal is to encourage independent management of the home. Skill acquisition can include safe cooking techniques, clothing management, and money management

Orientation and Mobility

Orientation and mobility instruction teaches methods for safe, independent travel so people who are blind or visually impaired will be able to get to and around their own homes, schools, workplaces and communities. The training emphasizes how to be aware of the surrounding environment, how to use the other senses and how to make use of any remaining vision.

Eye Health

Eye Health nurses assist consumers in accessing medical care, including surgery, which may be necessary to restore vision and/or prevent further vision loss as part of the employment plan. They teach people with visual disabilities and their families about eye disorders, the progression of eye diseases and the medications used to fight them along with the importance of good nutrition and proper eye care. Nurses also instruct those with diabetes how to administer their own insulin using specialized adaptive insulin devices.

2) Joseph Kohn Training Center (JKTC)

You may be interested in acquiring additional skills of independence by attending our comprehensive training center called the Joseph Kohn Training Center (JKTC). The JKTC is located in New Brunswick and opened in the fall of 1988, replacing the former facility that operated in Newark for more than thirty years.

The program curriculum of the JKTC is primarily developed for individuals seeking an employment goal. Individuals eighteen years or older who are blind or visually impaired and want to learn the independent living skills that will enable them to be integrated into their community may be eligible. JKTC's Pre-Admission Team determines final eligibility for each applicant. There is no fee for participating in the program for New Jersey residents.

The JKTC setting offers the opportunity for intensive training to develop blindness skills. The program is completed in twenty (20) weeks. The vocational rehabilitation and blindness skills training program is offered at the JKTC Monday through Friday from 9 am to 4 pm . The JKTC is closed on weekends and holidays. Optional activities are routinely scheduled in the evenings. The JKTC offers residential accommodations for twenty-four individuals in the Irving J. Kruger Residence. The residence is available Monday through Friday and consists of 12 rooms that are shared by two participants. The center is designed to provide wheelchair access and also includes accommodations for individuals who are deaf-blind. Onsite meals are provided for the residents and commuters in the center's Richard R. Friend Dining Room.

3) Business Enterprises New Jersey (BENJ)

You may be interested in exploring an opportunity to run your own business through the help of the agency's Business Enterprises New Jersey (BENJ). Since 1937, the BENJ has worked to help men and women who are legally blind become independent business operators and entrepreneurs.

The BENJ program was established by the federal Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936. Training classes are conducted at the Joseph Kohn Training Center in New Brunswick, followed by on-the-job training. Each day, thousands of customers are competently served at the various BENJ facilities currently open in New Jersey. These business operations include vending machine locations, newspaper stands, snack bars and full service cafeterias that are all managed by individuals who are legally blind.

BENJ Eligibility Criteria:

- must be at least eighteen years of age;
- meet the definition of legal blindness;
- be a U.S. Citizen;
- possess a high school diploma, G.E.D. or better;
- must have completed blindness skills training course at the Joseph Kohn Training Center or other accredited rehabilitation facility within a reasonable time period prior to the entrance of the program;

- must successfully complete a test in basic business mathematics;
- must have the capacity and physical stamina to work an 8-10 hour day five days per week and lift items up to 35 lbs.

BENJ staff also may provide you with assistance if you are interested in developing a small business. A BENJ Field Representative can guide you through the process of learning the requirements to participate in this program.

4) Assistive Technology Services

CBVI may also offer you assistance in acquiring assistive technology that will be necessary for you to perform your job. *Assistive technology* is defined as any item, piece of equipment, or system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is commonly used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. CBVI offers Technological Support Services that may assist you in developing useable methods to accessing computer equipment and other information technology. The goal of services is to minimize barriers to task performance by taking into account your specific needs as an individual who is blind or visually impaired.

The Technological Services Specialists at CBVI are responsible for maintaining and staffing six comprehensive and up-to-date Regional Technology Assistance Centers (RTAC) throughout the state. Each is stocked with a variety of assistive technology devices and open to the public by individual or group appointment. These labs are located in each of the Regional Offices at CBVI, (Newark, Freehold, Atlantic City and Cherry Hill), the Joseph Kohn Training Center, and the last is run in partnership with the Talking Book and Braille Center located at their main facility in Trenton.

In addition, Technological Services Specialists (TSS) perform technology assessments and skills evaluations for our consumers who are seeking employment and require equipment adaptations to assist them in their work and/or higher education environment. They make recommendations suitable for each consumer's unique

situation, such that it would enable the consumer to efficiently address his/her professional or academic responsibilities. They also install, setup, and configure recommended equipment for consumers on-site and instruct consumers on its proper uses.

TSS work with outside agencies, businesses and institutions to evaluate their work environments with respect to accessibility for visually impaired employees. They also suggest appropriate solutions to outside agencies that would make these workplaces and the software applications they use more compatible with assistive technology.

5) Supported Employment

As you get ready to seek employment, you and your counselor may decide that you require additional supports to obtain or maintain a job. Supported Employment services increases the opportunity for individuals who might require augmented levels of support, training, and advocacy to be employed in jobs for competitive wages. Individuals needing these services are most often individuals with multiple disabilities who have never worked before or have not been in the workforce for many years.

A job developer or job coach could work with you and your counselor to perform a broad range of functions including helping you with job applications, seeking out appropriate transportation, and arranging the necessary accommodations in the worksite. The supported employment approach provides a means for assessing not only your strengths and support needs but also, the ability of the employer to accommodate you, as their new employee. A supported employment approach further leads to the development and implementation of strategies to overcome barriers before they become problems that could jeopardize employment stability. These services are provided through community based agencies.

6) Post-Employment Services

After reaching your employment goal, you may find that you need additional services to maintain your employment. The agency can provide post-employment support after you become acclimated to the job, thus ensuring a smooth transition into the workforce. Sometimes

employment barriers are not identified until after a person goes to work (e.g. childcare issues, unreliable transportation, requirements of the job changes, need for additional accommodations become apparent, etc.) This additional support enhances the likelihood of a more compatible job match and puts the focus of resources on eliminating barriers in a specific worksite setting.

7) Referral to Personal Assistance Service Program (PASP)

If you need additional supports to maintain your independence and/or employment, the Personal Assistance Service Program (PASP) may offer the supports required. PASP provides routine, non-medical assistance to adults with disabilities who are employed, involved in community volunteer work, or attending school. Personal assistants help with tasks such as light housekeeping, bathing, dressing, preparing meals, shopping, driving or using public transportation. The number of hours of help that a person receives depends on individual need; up to 40 hours per week.

This program differs from many other personal assistance services programs, in that the people with disabilities direct their own services. To be eligible for PASP, you must be:

- a New Jersey resident
- physically disabled
- between 18 and 65 years old
- living in the community
- capable of directing and supervising their own services
- employed, preparing for employment, in school, or actively volunteering in the community

For more information about PASP call: 888-285-3036.

What are my rights and responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act?

This is a summary of your rights and responsibilities as they apply to the IPE that you and your counselor have developed. Throughout the rehabilitation process, you and your counselor will coordinate a program of counseling and services aimed at helping you get a job.

Your IPE shows what will be done, who will do it, and how you can tell if you've made progress toward achieving your employment outcome. These plans may change if money or programs are limited or if your situation changes. You and your counselor will review your IPE at least once a year or more often, as needed.

CLIENT RIGHTS

You have the right to;

- Be considered for services regardless of the nature and extent of your disability(s), age, gender, race, religion or national origin.
- Be treated with courtesy and respect.
- Expect provision of timely services in a professional manner.
- Have personal records handled with the utmost confidentiality in accord with Federal and State privacy laws.
- Based on a formal written request, a parent, friend, or advocate can act as your representative.
- Make an informed choice in selecting your employment goal, rehabilitation objectives, services, and service providers with the information provided by your counselor. The IPE which you may choose to develop on your own or with the assistance of a designated representative or your counselor is an agreement that both of you must sign before it becomes active.
- Request a waiver of a CBVI policy, based on extraordinary circumstances. A written request with justification of extraordinary circumstances and supporting documentation (if applicable) must be submitted by you (or your representative) to your VR Counselor for consideration by the regional manager or member of the administration, as appropriate.
- If there is disagreement between you and your counselor with regard to any aspect of agency services, you are encouraged to speak first with him or her in an attempt to resolve the matter. Should that effort prove unsuccessful, you are encouraged to speak with your counselor's supervisor or manager. If the matter remains unresolved, you have the right of appeal. You may request an Administrative Appeal of the Commission's Executive Director who will appoint an objective third party to

hear your appeal and make recommendations. Should the outcome of an Administrative Appeal not satisfy you, you have the right to request an Administrative Hearing before an Administrative Law Judge.

- Any time you disagree with a position held by the Commission, you may request representation and advocacy from the Client Assistance Program (CAP) to help in presenting your case. The CAP program can be contacted at (800) 922-7233 in NJ Only.

CBVI's policy and procedures are governed by New Jersey State Administrative Code and the federal law and regulations guiding the VR program. The code can be found at the agency's website at www.cbvi.nj.gov.

What is the Client Assistance Program (CAP)?

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is a federally funded program that advocates for and protects your rights as an individual with a disability who is seeking or receiving rehabilitation services. CAP can assist you in securing and understanding rehabilitation services.

CAP was established as a mandated program by the 1984 Amendment to the Rehabilitation Act. Every state and territory, as a condition for receiving allotments under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act, must have a CAP.

CAP provides individual legal representation and non-legal individual and systemic advocacy, together with information and referral services, outreach, and education. CAP usually works through negotiation, but is authorized to pursue legal, administrative and other appropriate remedies.

Who is Eligible for CAP Services?

You should contact CAP if:

- you applied for rehabilitation services and were turned down;
- you are concerned about your relationship with your counselor or staff members;
- you are dissatisfied with the rehabilitation services you are receiving;

- you have questions regarding policies, procedures, services or programs;
- your case has been closed and you want to be reconsidered for rehabilitation services; or
- you are just not sure what to do.

How do I contact CAP?

Disability Rights New Jersey 210 South Broad Street, 3rd Floor
Trenton, New Jersey 08608 (609) 292-9742 or (800) 922-7233 in NJ
Only (609) 777-0187 (Fax) (609) 633-7106 (TTY) advocate@drnj.org
www.drnj.org

Counselor's Responsibilities:

- Provide counseling and guidance.
- Keep information confidential, except where the law requires the counselor to share the information.
- Inform you of resources available to you and give you specific referrals as appropriate.
- Provide information regarding your rights and remedies, including your right to appeal, request mediation, or file a discrimination complaint.
- Provide information about the Client Assistance Program (CAP) and how to contact CAP.
- Assist in the coordination of services needed for your plan.
- Review your progress periodically and complete an Annual Review to continue service delivery without delay.
- Reach an agreement with you and provide a written amendment for your signature if there are substantive changes in your plan.
- Keep you fully informed throughout the process, including the opportunity for a full consultation when your case file (also called record of services) is closed.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES are also described as part of the written IPE. They are important to the success of the plan. You are expected to:

- Keep your counselor advised of any changes of address, phone number, and how you can be reached;
- Keep appointments and attend scheduled activities;
- Follow all medical and treatment recommendations;
- Obtain reports, grades and other needed information for your counselor;
- Maintain satisfactory performance and regular attendance, e.g., training, school, or job;
- Always obtain written authorization from your counselor prior to receiving services;
- Tell your counselor of any changes in your income or needs;
- Contribute to the cost of some services as determined by the Financial Needs Survey;
- Apply for assistance from other sources before requesting services from CBVI;
- Tell your counselor of any major changes in your health or ability to carry out this plan;
- Fully participate in the process of obtaining employment;
- Tell your counselor when you get a job and provide him/her with the employers name and address, job title, salary, and benefits when you are employed, including official employment and wage verification documentation.

CONSUMER and COUNSELOR ALIKE ARE EXPECTED to exhibit respectful and professional conduct at all times. This includes all parties that are involved in assisting the consumer with achieving set VR goals. If this expectation is violated, it may cause significant delays in service delivery until a resolution can be reached, if possible. Examples of unacceptable conduct include but are not limited to rude, disrespectful, discriminatory, threatening, harassing, or abusive behavior or speech.

CBVI WILL NOT PAY FOR SERVICES, SUPPLIES, OR EQUIPMENT UNLESS YOU FIRST OBTAIN WRITTEN APPROVAL FROM YOUR COUNSELOR.

How can I fully participate in seeking employment?

Obtaining employment is a joint responsibility between you and your counselor. Seeking employment is a full time job requiring an investment of your time and energy. You will be expected to prepare a resume with the assistance of your counselor and actively seek job leads and interviews. You want to explore all avenues to find job openings which will increase your likelihood of success. As with all other aspects of the process, it is imperative to communicate with your counselor about all your efforts in finding work. We wish you much success as you strive to achieve your employment goals!

OFFICES AND FACILITIES

Administrative Office:

153 Halsey Street, 6th Floor

P.O. Box 47017

Newark, NJ 07102

Phone: (973) 648-3333

Fax: (973) 648-7364 - Administrative

(973) 648-3389 - Fiscal

Dr. Bernice Davis, Executive Director

bernice.davis@dhs.nj.gov

Newark Service Center:

153 Halsey Street, 5th Floor

Newark, NJ 07101

Phone: (973) 648-2111

Fax: (973) 648-7674

Dr. Aaliyah Dent, Manager

aaliyah.dent@dhs.nj.gov

Freehold Service Center:

100 Daniels Way

Freehold, NJ 07728.

Phone: (732) 308-4001

Fax: (732) 308-4002

John Reiff, Manager

john.reiff@dhs.nj.gov

Cherry Hill Service Center:

2201 Rt. 38 East, Suite 600

Cherry Hill, NJ 08002

Phone: (856) 482-3700

Fax: (856) 482 -3770

Diana Cortez, Manager

diana.cortez@dhs.nj.gov

Atlantic City Service Center:

1300 Atlantic Avenue, 3rd floor

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Phone: (609) 441-3074

Fax: *Diana Cortez, Manager*

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Joseph Kohn Training Center:

130 Livingston Avenue
New Brunswick, NJ 08903
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Susan Engstrom, Manager

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