





Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Students to Succeed in Employment



New Jersey

Department of Education, Office of Special Education
Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Department of Human Services, Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

2024-2025 School Year










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Agenda

- Define competitive integrated employment
- Who are the students who can be helped by vocational rehabilitation (VR) services?
- Types of VR services available to help students with disabilities prepare for, obtain, and maintain competitive integrated employment
- How and when to obtain these VR services for students from State agencies
- Role of school staff and others in facilitating and providing services for students


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What is Competitive Integrated Employment?

- Full or Part-time (including self-employment)
- Compensated at or above minimum wage (currently \$15.13 per hour in NJ), and not less than the customary rate paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by others
- Must be eligible for the same level of benefits and opportunities for advancement provided to other employees
- Location of work allows an employee with disabilities to interact with others without disabilities



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New Jersey is an Employment First State!

- Which means: Competitive employment in the general workforce is the first priority and preferred outcome for all people with disabilities in New Jersey
- **Employment First** is consistent with the priorities of the **Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act**
















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Which Students in NJ Can Access Needed VR Services?

- All students aged 14 through 21:
 - Who are eligible for special education and related services under the IDEA
 - Who are individuals with a disability, for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Students can be enrolled in a variety of educational settings
- Students must be considering the goal of competitive integrated employment














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Types of VR Services for Students

- VR services that students with disabilities may access to prepare for, obtain, and maintain competitive integrated employment fall into two categories:
 1. Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and
 2. “Traditional” Vocational Rehabilitation Services

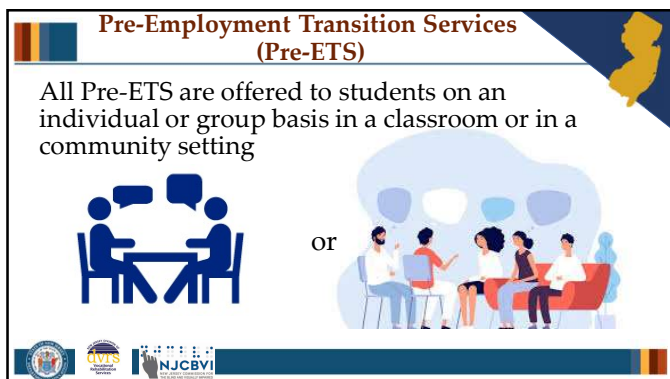
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1. Job Exploration Counseling

- Teaching students about in-demand industry sectors and occupations, and non-traditional employment
- Administering vocational interest inventories and explaining the results
- Identifying career pathways of interest to students
- Sharing local labor market information that applies to students' particular interests











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2. Work-Based Learning Experiences

- Can be in-school, after school, paid, unpaid, volunteer, and **must be in the community to the maximum extent possible**
- Includes Internships, Job Sampling Opportunities, On-the-Job Training, Mentoring Opportunities in the community, Worksite Tours and Job Shadowing










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2. Work-Based Learning Experiences (cont.)

- All work-based learning must comply with all applicable Federal and State laws and regulations including Child Labor law
- A great resource to learn more about child labor law and other topics related to student workers is here:
<https://nj.gov/labor/youngworkers/>











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3. Counseling on Opportunities for Enrollment in Postsecondary Education Programs




- Assisting students to successfully transition to, or remain enrolled in, a postsecondary education or training program by teaching them how to:
 - Identify their options for postsecondary education and training
 - Understand how their career goals line up with education and training options
 - Enroll in a postsecondary education or training program





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3. Counseling on Opportunities for Enrollment in Postsecondary Education Programs (cont.)






- Apply for postsecondary financial aid
- Learn about available supports and assistive technology that they can use at college or other postsecondary educational setting under Section 504
- Learn about course offerings, career options, and the types of training needed to succeed in the workplace
- Make decisions about changing majors and/or education or training programs

504 Coordinator

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4. Workplace Readiness Training



- Teaches students critically important social and independent living skills necessary for successful employment
- Examples:
 - Communication and interpersonal skills
 - Financial literacy
 - Job seeking skills












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5. Instruction in Self-Advocacy


- Includes peer mentoring and teaching students about:
 - Disability and its impact
 - Rights and responsibilities
 - How to request accommodations, services, and supports
 - How to utilize mentors to get support from school staff and others at a worksite and in organizations














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Auxiliary Aids and Services


- If a student requires an auxiliary aid or service to access or participate in any of the Pre-Employment Transition Services, DVRS or CBVI must pay for such costs if no other public entity is required to provide such aids or services










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The Referral Process to Obtain Pre-ETS


- Students with disabilities are all considered **“potentially eligible” (PE)** for vocational rehabilitation if they are considering the goal of competitive integrated employment
- These students do not need to apply to or be determined eligible for DVRS or CBVI to receive needed Pre-ETS**
- They simply need to be **referred by anyone** to DVRS or CBVI to open a **“PE” case** to obtain needed Pre-ETS














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The Referral Process to Obtain Pre-ETS (cont.)


- The student referral form for Pre-ETS must be signed by a parent or legal guardian if the student is under age 18
- Students who are 18 years old and older and are their own guardians can sign their own referral form without the need for a parent/guardian signature
- School staff should actively assist with this process by facilitating getting the parent's signature on the referral form when needed. This is critically important!!

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Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired




Students who are Blind or visually impaired as their primary disability must be referred to CBVI for Pre-ETS and other VR Services as needed

They should **not** also be referred to DVRS, since this would be unnecessary and a duplication of services and efforts










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Services for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- DVRS has counselors called Deaf Language Specialists (DLS) for students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing and use ASL as their primary mode of communication
- DVRS has a contract with three Regional Career Centers (RCC) in the North, Central and Southern parts of the state, and these centers provide the needed Pre-Employment Transition Services to these students

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To Refer a Student for Pre-ETS from ...





DVRS

- Anyone* can complete the online **Pre-ETS student referral form** found here:
[https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/assets/PDFs/DVR-358%20\(7-24\)PreETSReferral.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/assets/PDFs/DVR-358%20(7-24)PreETSReferral.pdf)


*As previously mentioned, this referral form must be signed by a parent or legal guardian if the student is under age 18

CBVI

- To request Pre-ETS for a student who is blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired, please contact the student's CBVI teacher of the blind or visually impaired for a referral (if applicable) or contact a regional CBVI office listed here:
<https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/cbvi/facilities/>











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Coordination is Needed to Provide Pre-ETS

- IEP teams must collaboratively work with local DVRS and CBVI offices to ensure the coordinated provision of needed Pre-ETS
- LEAs (i.e., local schools) are obligated to provide transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). They are responsible for providing and paying for any transition service that is considered special education or related services necessary for ensuring a free appropriate public education (FAPE), as required under IDEA.
- Pre-Employment Transition Services **do NOT replicate or replace** services provided by the school; rather, they **supplement and complement** the transition services provided by the school











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The Role of School Staff

- On at least an annual basis, IEP teams and 504 coordinators should determine the following for each student with disabilities:
 - Which Pre-ETS has the student already received from either DVRS/CBVI?
 - Which Pre-ETS, if any, does the student continue to need?
 - If the student needs one or more Pre-ETS, who will be responsible for providing these needed services; the school or DVRS/CBVI?

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IEP Team Consideration


This section in the IEP, if included, is for the IEP Team to consider the student's need for each Pre-ETS and record previously provided services

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES				
	Does the student currently need this service?	Record Previous Date(s) the service was provided by:		
		School	NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)	NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI)
1. Job exploration counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
2. Work-based learning experiences	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
3. Counseling about opportunities for enrollment in programs at institutions of higher education	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
4. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
5. Instruction in self-advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			

If any of these services are determined to be currently needed, the school should consult with DVRS or CBVI to determine who will be responsible for arranging and providing each needed service.

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IEP Team Consideration (cont.)


Use this space to document the dates of previously provided services by the school, DVRS or CBVI

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES				
	Does the student currently need this service?	Record Previous Date(s) the service was provided by:		
		School	NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)	NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI)
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IEP Team Consideration (cont.)


Indicate if the student currently needs any of the 5 services

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES				
	Does the student currently need this service?	Record Previous Date(s) the service was provided by:		
		School	NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)	NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI)
1. Job exploration counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
2. Work-based learning experiences	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
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If any of these services are determined to be currently needed, the school should consult with DVRS or CBVI to determine who will be responsible for arranging and providing each needed service.

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IEP Team Consideration (cont.)


Consult with DVRS or CBVI if needed to determine who will provide the needed services

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES				
	Does the student currently need this service?	Record Previous Date(s) the service was provided by:		
		School	NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)	NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI)
1. Job exploration counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
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If any of these services are determined to be currently needed, the school should consult with DVRS or CBVI to determine who will be responsible for arranging and providing each needed service.








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When to Refer a Student to DVRS/CBVI




- Since a student may have already received services from their middle or high school that are similar to Pre-ETS, a student should only be referred to DVRS or CBVI to receive Pre-ETS if both of the following are true:
 - The student continues to have a need for one or more Pre-ETS, and
 - The student is not expected to receive similar services from the school, or the school's services that will be provided will not sufficiently meet the student's need


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"Traditional" Vocational Rehabilitation Services










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"Traditional" Vocational Rehabilitation Services

- Many students with disabilities need more services from DVRS or CBVI than the 5 Pre-ETS to prepare for, obtain, or maintain employment
- Students who need these "traditional" VR services (e.g., job coaching, tuition assistance, vehicle modifications, etc.) should be assisted to apply for eligibility with DVRS or CBVI
- If found eligible for VR services, students can receive these services (and any needed Pre-ETS) while still in school to compliment educational services, and as needed, continue receiving VR services after graduating high school












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Who Pays for Vocational Rehabilitation Services?


- DVRS will look at the income of eligible individuals (and their parents if the person is under age 22 on January 1) to determine if they will be required to share the cost of some VR services. These are called "cost" VR services.
- CBVI procedures for determining cost sharing include the person's dependency status for tax purposes.
- Other "no-cost" VR services are fully funded by the public agency (DVRS or CBVI) regardless of the income of eligible individuals (and their parents if applicable).






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Individuals Receiving SSI and SSDI Benefits



Anyone who is receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits and seeking VR services will not be asked to pay for any portion of any VR service to be provided to them by DVRS or CBVI regardless of income

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Examples of “Cost” Vocational Rehabilitation Services

- Post-secondary Education and Training
- Tools and Equipment
- Physical and Mental Restoration
- Assistive Technology Devices

















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“No-Cost” Vocational Rehabilitation Services

- Examples of “no cost” VR services include:
 - Diagnostic Evaluations
 - Counseling and guidance services
 - Supported Employment (e.g., job coaching)
 - Time-limited Placement and Coaching
 - Job Placement
 - Job Accommodations
 - Skills Training
 - Project Search www.projectsearch.us








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Referral for Vocational Rehabilitation Services

- Students with disabilities can be referred by anyone at anytime to DVRS for an eligibility determination by completing an online referral form or by calling their local DVRS office:
<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=0cN2UAI4n0uzauCkG9ZCpzVnFpBuuFNArhLYruJEYsRUM0FOTfk1UTNV0VIEOTBZT000Tk5HWkI5TCOIQCNOPWcu>
- Students who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired and already receiving Pre-ETS from CBVI can request an application for VR Services from the student’s CBVI Transition Counselor












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The Role of School Staff

- Assist students with the referral process to receive needed services from DVRS and CBVI
 - Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
 - “Traditional” Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services












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Consultation and Technical Assistance

- Beginning when students will be turning age 14 and older, IEP teams must annually **consider the need** for individualized consultation and technical assistance from DVRS, CBVI, (and other agencies that provide services for individuals with disabilities)
- When requested, staff from these agencies (called Transition Counselors) can share their expertise with IEP team members on a broad range of topics related to preparing a student for competitive integrated employment











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Transition Counselors

- Each local DVRS office has a Transition Counselor to work with school districts within the county
- Your county’s DVRS Transition Counselor is your primary contact person for providing consultation and technical assistance and assisting with referral of students for services while in school and after graduation from high school
- CBVI assigns a Transition Counselor to each student aged 14 through 21 who is blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired and known to the agency










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Develop and Use a Protocol

- Working collaboratively with local partners at DVRS and CBVI, develop and use a protocol that specifies procedures for how your school and these agencies will work together to help students prepare for a successful future in the workforce.







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Limitations on the use of Subminimum Wage Employment




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What is Subminimum Wage Employment?


- Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act authorizes employers, after receiving a certificate from the U.S. Dept. of Labor, to pay special minimum wages - wages less than the Federal minimum wage (currently \$7.25 per hour) - to workers who have disabilities for the work being performed




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


Limitations on the use of Subminimum Wage Employment




- WIOA prohibits schools from contracting with businesses that pay workers subminimum wage (e.g., sheltered workshops) so that students can participate in work at subminimum wages, including no wages







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Promotion of Pre-ETS, and Traditional Vocational Rehabilitation Services




- Representatives of DVRS, CBVI, and NJDOE meet monthly to plan and coordinate promotional activities
 - Collaborate to develop and conduct presentations for school staff, students, parents, and others
 - Collaborate on the development and publishing of resources







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Thank You!



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