Summary of VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Benefits

Employment and Independent Living Services

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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As part of our mission to serve you, VA provides a variety of employment and independent living services through the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program. VA may provide you with vocational counseling, job search assistance, and other education and training services.

To determine whether your military service qualifies you for these services, VA conducts an evaluation of your interests, aptitudes, abilities, and an assessment of how your disability affects your ability to work. The services VA provides you are based on the results of your evaluation.

VA can offer you the support you need in order to pursue a career, develop job skills, or provide job accommodations to help you perform your job. The VR&E program, also known as Chapter 31, provides a range of career services, including:

- Comprehensive evaluation to determine your abilities, skills, and employment interests
- Career counseling and rehabilitation planning for employment
- Employment services, such as job training, job-seeking skills, résumé development, and other work-readiness assistance
- Assistance in finding and keeping a job, including how to use special employer incentives and job accommodations
- On-the-Job Training (OJT), apprenticeships, college training, and non-paid work experiences

In addition, comprehensive rehabilitation and independent living services are also available if you are severely disabled and not currently ready or able to seek employment.

VR&E is specifically for Servicemembers and Veterans with service-connected illnesses and injuries. However, you may qualify for career counseling services from VA if you recently separated from the military or are using VA education benefits.

Access Your VA Benefits

Go to eBenefits at **www.ebenefits.va.gov**, your one-stop shop to learn about and apply for your benefits.

eBenefits
My Gateway to Benefit Information

Eligibility. Servicemembers and Veterans are eligible for VR&E services under the following circumstances:

» You have obtained a service-connected disability rating from VA of at least 10%, or a pre-discharge disability rating ("memorandum rating") of 20% or more from VA, **AND**

» You have received, or will receive, a discharge from service that is other than dishonorable, **OR**

» You may qualify without a VA rating if you are severely ill or injured and have been referred to a military Physical Evaluation Board or are participating in the DoD/VA Integrated Disability Evaluation System process

In general, you must use all VR&E services within 12 years from the following dates, whichever is later:

» The date you separated from active military service, **OR**

» The date VA officially notified you that you have a qualifying service-connected disability rating

Veterans with service-connected disabilities may apply for VR&E benefits at any time. You may request a memorandum rating from VA if you have not already received a VA service-connected disability rating of at least 10%, or a pre-discharge rating of 20% or more from VA.

If a VRC finds that you have a serious employment handicap (SEH), you may be entitled to VR&E services even if your rating is less than 20% and/or you have passed your 12-year basic period of eligibility.

EVALUATING ENTITLEMENT TO VR&E SERVICES

After you apply and VA determines you are eligible for VR&E services, VA will schedule a meeting for you with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC). The VRC will assess your interests, aptitudes and abilities, and whether your service-connected disabilities impair your ability to find and/or hold a job using the training and occupational skills you already have. The VRC will use this assessment to determine your entitlement to VR&E services. If you are entitled to services, the VRC will work with you to explore employment options or further evaluate your need for services leading to more independence in daily living.

Working with a VRC on a Rehabilitation Plan. If you are found to be entitled to VR&E services, you will work with a VRC to identify training requirements, explore wage information, and find employment opportunities. One of the VRC's main responsibilities is to help you develop a rehabilitation plan so you can gain suitable employment or achieve an independent living goal.

A rehabilitation plan is an individualized written outline of the services, resources, and criteria that will be used to help you achieve your employment and/or independent living goals. In developing a rehabilitation plan, you and your counselor will select one of five tracks to pursue: reemployment, rapid access to employment, self-employment, employment through long-term services, or independent living services.

Serious Employment Handicap (SEH)

A trained VRC determines if an employment handicap significantly impairs your ability to prepare for, obtain, or retain employment that is consistent with your abilities, aptitudes, and interests. If an SEH is determined, the basic period of eligibility for VR&E services may be extended.

FIND THE RIGHT CAREER PATH FOR YOU

VR&E can help you obtain one of four different employment options by working with you to establish a rehabilitation plan with specific goals. If you have service-connected disabilities that are so severe that you cannot immediately consider work, then the independent living services track may be right for you.

Track	Goals of Rehabilitation Plan	Who It Is For
Reemployment	Consultation with the employer, job accommodations, job modification, and case management; coordination and referral for services, such as VA health care, reemployment rights advice, and work adjustment services	Servicemembers leaving active duty due to medical issues and Veterans with service-connected disabilities
Rapid Access to Employment	Job readiness preparation, résumé development, job search assistance, employment resource development, job accommodations, and post-employment follow-up	Those who express a desire to seek employment soon after separation or who already have the necessary skills and/or training to be competitive in the job market in an appropriate occupation
Self-Employment	Analysis of your business concept, development of a business plan, training in operating small businesses, marketing and financial assistance, and guidance in obtaining adequate resources to implement the business plan	Those who have limited access to traditional employment, need flexible work schedules, or need an accommodating work environment due to disabling conditions or other life circumstances
Employment Through Long-Term Services	Training and education, including: On-the-Job Training (OJT), apprenticeships, internships, job shadowing, work monitoring, work-study, public-private job partnering, or higher education sufficient to qualify for and enter suitable employment	Those who need specialized training and/or education to obtain and maintain suitable employment
Independent Living Services	Assistive technology, independent living skills training, and connection to community-based support services	Those who are not currently ready for employment and need rehabilitation services to live more independently

After a rehabilitation plan is developed, the VRC will help you implement it to achieve suitable employment or independent living. If the VRC believes you need additional services, then the counselor may provide you with medical and dental referrals, tutorial assistance, adjustment counseling, and other services necessary for you to achieve your goals.

Other Support. VA pays for tuition, fees, books, equipment, tools, or other supplies you need to succeed in your rehabilitation program. During your program, you may qualify for a monthly subsistence allowance to help you meet the additional commuting or living expenses you incur while in a training program. The amount of the allowance is based on your type of training, rate of attendance, and number of dependents. You will receive this allowance in addition to any VA compensation or military retired pay you may already receive.

Veterans without Employment Handicaps

Some Veterans who apply for VR&E may not be deemed to have an employment handicap. In these cases, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors provide career counseling services and help in locating other resources to address rehabilitation and employment needs. Such Veterans may be referred to one or more of the following:

- State vocational rehabilitation programs
- Department of Labor employment programs
- State, federal, or local agencies providing services for employment or small business development
- Internet-based resources for rehabilitation and employment
- Information about applying for financial aid

VA also offers career counseling services to:

- Servicemembers six months prior to discharge
- Veterans within one year following discharge
- Veterans eligible for any VA education benefits, such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill

How to Apply. To apply for VR&E benefits, fill out the Disabled Veterans Application for Vocational Rehabilitation form (**VA Form 28-1900**).

You can access this form by:

» Applying online via **www.ebenefits.va.gov**, your one-stop shop to apply for and learn about your benefits

» www.VetSuccess.gov

» Downloading the form at **www.va.gov/forms**

» Calling VA toll free at 1-800-827-1000 to have a claim form mailed to you

» Visiting your local VA VR&E office. For the VA VR&E office nearest you, call VA toll free at 1-800-827-1000

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I obtain VR&E services if I have a service-connected disability rating of less than 20%?
Yes, you can obtain such services if you are a Veteran with a rating of 10% and are found to have a serious employment handicap (SEH). You may also qualify without a VA rating if you are a severely ill or injured Servicemember who has been referred to a military Physical Evaluation Board or is currently participating in the DoD/VA Integrated Disability Evaluation System process.

What does a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) do?
A VRC evaluates your interests, aptitudes, and abilities. A VRC also determines if you are entitled to VR&E services and, if you are, helps you establish a rehabilitation plan to find appropriate work or achieve more independence in daily living. Based on your skills and interests, a VRC will explore career possibilities with you, such as returning to your previous job, training for a new job, or starting your own business.

I had a job before I went on active duty. Now that I separated from the military, will I go back to work at the same company?
Returning to your previous company is one option you can consider. A VRC will work with you and representatives from the Department of Labor to ensure that your re-employment rights are upheld and your former employer makes reasonable accommodations if you wish to return to work there.

I CARE
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

VA adopted five core values that define "who we are," our culture, and how we care for Veterans, their families, and other beneficiaries. The values are Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence (I-CARE).

Additional VA Benefits

Disabilities determined by VA to be related to your military service can lead to monthly non-taxable compensation, enrollment in the VA health care system, a 10-point hiring preference for federal employment, and other important benefits. Ask your VA representative or Veterans Service Organization (VSO) representative about Disability Compensation, Pension, Health Care, Caregiver Program, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services, Educational Assistance, Home Loan Guaranty, Insurance, and/or Dependents' and Survivors' Benefits. You can search for a VSO representative online at **www.ebenefits.va.gov**.

Thank you for your service.
Now let us serve you.

For More Information

For more information about VR&E benefits, including time limits, establishing a service-connected disability, and how to apply, please:

- Find links to VA benefits information and apply at **www.ebenefits.va.gov**
- Go to the VA web site at **www.va.gov/benefits**
- Visit us at **www.VetSuccess.gov** where you can find current job listings from employers seeking to hire Veterans. You can also find the nearest VR&E office and other information, such as tips about applying for a job, interviewing, and writing a good résumé and cover letter.
- Use IRIS, VA's tool to find information and ask questions online at **https://iris.custhelp.com**
- Call us at **1-800-827-1000**
- Visit the nearest VA regional office. To find the VA regional office nearest you, go to our website or call VA toll free at **1-800-827-1000**

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Benefits Administration
Washington, DC 20420

T 800-827-1000
www.va.gov/benefits

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