

GUIDE TO VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR) SERVICES IN OHIO

Disability Rights Ohio developed this guide as a resource for people with disabilities, their families, and their advocates.

This guide describes some of the ways to seek and receive vocational rehabilitation (VR) services from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) in Ohio, in order to help you as you move through the VR process. This information is provided solely as informal guidance and not legal advice. For advice regarding your rights and responsibilities, contact an attorney or Disability Rights Ohio's Client Assistance Program (CAP).



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Guide 1: About the Client Assistance Program (CAP)

Through Ohio's Client Assistance Program (CAP), Disability Rights Ohio advocates for and protects the rights of individuals with disabilities who are applying for or receiving vocational rehabilitation (VR) services from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). The CAP also assists people who are applying for or receiving federally funded services from Independent Living Centers throughout Ohio.

CAP provides individual legal representation and advocacy, information and referral services, outreach, and education.

If you want or have concerns about your services from OOD, the CAP can:

- ❖ Provide information about VR services
- ❖ Advocate if you:
 - Have been turned down for VR services
 - Have concerns about your rehabilitation counselor
 - Are not satisfied with the VR services you are receiving
 - Do not agree with a decision to close your case
 - Have other problems with VR services

If you think you have been discriminated against by your employer, the CAP can:

- ❖ Provide information on your rights under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- ❖ Give you information about how to make a reasonable accommodation request
- ❖ Provide information about where you can file a complaint

If you want or have concerns about independent living services, the CAP can help.

Independent living services include:

- ❖ Information and referral services
- ❖ Independent living skills training
- ❖ Peer counseling
- ❖ Individual and systems advocacy
- ❖ Services that help you move from an institution to a home in your community
- ❖ Services that help you remain in your home so that you do not need to move to an institution
- ❖ Services that help you transition from school to postsecondary life

For help with CAP issues, call Disability Rights Ohio at 800-282-9181 and select option 2 for our intake department. You can also use our [online intake form](#).

Guide 2: About Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD)

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) is a state agency. It is Ohio's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency. OOD's goal is to help people with disabilities get ready for, find and keep jobs. Its services are available in all 88 counties in Ohio.

OOD helps people with all types of disabilities. The Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired (BSVI) is the part of OOD that helps people with low vision or blindness. The Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) is the part of OOD that helps people with other disabilities such as physical, intellectual, mental health, or sensory disabilities. OOD partners with other agencies and organizations to provide vocational rehabilitation (VR) services.

OOD is not a temp agency or job bank. OOD helps people with disabilities get ready for, find and keep jobs in the community (the same jobs that anybody else can apply for). Through their program, they provide or pay for supports to help address any obstacles to working that result from a disability. Examples of services you can get from OOD are:

- ❖ Evaluation of and treatment for your disability;
- ❖ Services to help you get ready for a job, such as internships, learning about what jobs are available, or making a resume;
- ❖ Help looking for and finding a job;
- ❖ Help to get education and training you need after high school (such as help paying for college);
- ❖ Help with transportation to and from services; and
- ❖ Evaluating and paying for equipment or technology you might need to do a job.

It is a good idea to contact OOD if you have questions about OOD or its services. You may also contact Disability Rights Ohio (DRO). DRO has a Client Assistance Program (CAP) that helps and advocates for people who are applying for or using services from OOD. More information about DRO's Client Assistance Program is available at [Guide 1](#).

More information about OOD is available at <https://ood.ohio.gov/>.

- ❖ OOD's BVR Program: <https://ood.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ood/individuals-with-disabilities/services/vocational-rehabilitation>
- ❖ OOD's BSVI Program: <https://ood.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ood/individuals-with-disabilities/services/services-for-the-visually-impaired>

Guide 3: Applying for Services from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD)

How to Apply

Any person with a disability may apply for services from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). Here is how to start an application:

- ❖ Apply online at <https://www.oodworks.com> (on this site, you answer questions to help decide if you want to apply, and if so, make a profile and apply for services);
- ❖ Mail the OOD application to your OOD local office (here is a link to download the OOD application: <https://ood.ohio.gov/static/Policies/80-VR-01.A+Partic+Info+Application+for+VR+Services.docx>);
- ❖ Call your local office and say you want to apply; or
- ❖ Go to your local office and ask to apply.

You can find your local office at the following link: <https://ood.ohio.gov/about-us/Find+Us>

Intake Appointment and Initial Interview

After you contact OOD, OOD staff will reach out to you to schedule an Intake Appointment and an Initial Interview as soon as possible but within 30 days. Sometimes these will be scheduled together. The purpose of the Intake Appointment is to review and complete the application, and for OOD to give you information about their program. The purpose of the Initial Interview is for OOD to get information about your disability and your needs related to employment so it can decide if you are eligible for their services.

Information and Documents to Provide to OOD

To decide if you are eligible, the counselor will use their observations and the information and documents you or your family give them, such as your medical and education records and disability decisions made by other agencies. It is always best to have the most up-to-date information you have and make it available to OOD. This is especially true if your disability changes.

Here are types of documents you can give OOD:

- ❖ Identification, such as a State ID, driver's license, social security card, and/or birth certificate;
- ❖ School records or reports (such as IEP, MFE, or ETR);
- ❖ Medical, psychological, or psychiatric records;
- ❖ Hearing or vision reports;
- ❖ Reports or assessments from other agencies (such as BWC, SSA, or County Board of DD);
- ❖ Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) award letter that says how much you are getting (if this applies to you). If you cannot find the award letter, contact Social Security at www.ssa.gov or 800-772-1213 or visit your local Social Security office and get a copy sent to you. If you are unable to bring proof, OOD must check with Social Security to make sure you do receive SSDI or SSI benefits;

- ❖ Other records that show your diagnoses, treatment and medications; and/or
- ❖ Paperwork of a criminal record of any kind (if this applies to you). Even if you have a list of any charges or convictions, this will help.

You should also make a list of your doctors and other treatment providers, especially if you do not have records of your disability. You could also consider getting a letter signed by your doctor explaining your disability, why your disability makes it hard for you to get or keep a job, and what you need to help you work. Be prepared to discuss your education and work history, and to describe how your disability affects your ability to work or live on your own. Think about possible solutions or what help you may need.

Know Your Rights and Responsibilities

At your first meeting with OOD, you should get a document called “Applicant and Eligible Individual Rights and Duties.” (<https://ood.ohio.gov/static/Policies/80-VR-01.D+App+and+Elig+Indiv+OOD+Rights.docx>). It is very important for you to read and keep this document because it tells you what your rights are, what your responsibilities are (what you have to do to keep getting services), and what you can do if you don’t like something OOD did (how to appeal). If you have any questions about your rights and responsibilities, you can ask to speak with your counselor or their supervisor or call Disability Rights Ohio’s Client Assistance Program (CAP).

Confidentiality

All information you give OOD is confidential and will only be used for your Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) case, unless you have signed a release form giving OOD permission to speak with or get records from other people or agencies, or in situations where the law requires OOD to release the information.

When to Call Disability Rights Ohio’s Client Assistance Program (CAP)

The application process goes smoothly for many. However, you should call the CAP if:

- ❖ You have questions or concerns about how to apply;
- ❖ OOD refuses to take your application; or
- ❖ OOD does not provide you with an accommodation you need to apply (such as a reader, interpreter, or large print application).

Guide 4: Eligibility for Services from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD)

After the Intake Appointment and Initial Interview, an OOD counselor (sometimes called a “Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor” or “VRC”) will decide if you are eligible.

Eligibility Criteria

You are eligible for services from OOD if:

You have a disability;

Your disability makes it hard for you to get or keep a job;

You need OOD’s services to get or keep a job that is right for you; and

You can benefit from OOD’s services.

Timeline

OOD has 60 days after your application is done to decide if you are eligible. There are two exceptions to this:

1. The counselor must ask and get your permission for more time if they cannot decide within 60 days because of an unusual and extreme situation beyond their control; or
2. The counselor believes your disability is too severe and is unsure if you can benefit from OOD’s services, so they are offering you “trial work experiences” (described below).

Information Used to Decide Eligibility

To decide if you are eligible, the counselor will use their observations and the information and documents you or your family give them, as described in **Guide 3**. You may be asked to help get more records. You may also be asked to sign release forms that give OOD permission to get information about you from your medical, educational or other providers. These forms must show who OOD is asking to provide information, what information OOD is asking the provider to give, and the reason OOD is asking for the information. It is your choice to give OOD permission to get this information. But remember that OOD must be able to get enough information to decide if you are eligible.

Assessments

If the counselor does not have enough information to decide if you are eligible (such as to show you have a disability or a need for services), the counselor may arrange for an assessment. For example, if your medical information is old or your disability has changed, OOD may ask that you go to the doctor to assess you and/or give a diagnosis.

Types of assessments you may be asked to do include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ Medical, psychological or neuropsychological evaluations to diagnose a physical, intellectual, psychological, or cognitive disability;
- ❖ Vision or hearing exams to diagnose a visual or hearing disability;
- ❖ Speech evaluations to diagnose a communicative disability; or
- ❖ Functional capacity evaluations.

OOD can pay for assessments you need to decide if you are eligible. They may also be able to pay for transportation or child care you need to be able to go to an assessment in some situations. Tell the counselor about any concerns you have about traveling or attending assessments.

You have the right to choose the provider for your assessment. Your counselor can provide you a list of providers that OOD uses. If the provider you want is not on the list, you can ask your counselor to contact your provider to see if they are willing to accept OOD's rate of payment. If the provider is willing to do this and is qualified to do the assessment, OOD may permit this provider to do the testing. OOD can also make exceptions to its rules about who can provide you services. Exceptions are made on case-by-case bases.

If you need an accommodation for your disability at an assessment (such as a sign language interpreter, reader or personal assistance services), you should ask for it. OOD must make sure you get reasonable accommodations you need. You should not have to pay for any accommodations.

Trial Work Experiences

If your disability is so severe that OOD cannot decide if you are able to benefit from their services, you may be required to do "trial work experiences" to see if you are able to succeed in work situations. Trial work must be done in the most integrated setting possible and chosen by you. (An integrated setting is one that includes people who have disabilities and people who do not have disabilities). Most people who have severe disabilities can still benefit from OOD's services to reach a job goal. OOD must show by clear and convincing evidence (a heavy burden) that you cannot work before deciding you are ineligible.

Other Common Questions About Eligibility

Here are a few more things to know about eligibility:

1. If you receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for your disability and you want to work, OOD must presume you are eligible.
2. There is no length of time you must have lived in Ohio before being able to apply. You just have to be present in Ohio.
3. You can reapply to OOD, even if you have used OOD's services before. OOD will still need to decide if you are eligible, but may be able to use some of the records from your past VR case to help speed up the eligibility process (if your VR case is not too old).

Priority Groups

If you are eligible for OOD services, you will get a letter that says you are eligible and what priority group you are in. All people who are eligible for OOD services are put into different priority groups based on the significance of their disability. This is because when there is a waiting list for OOD's services, people in some priority groups have to wait until funds are available to pay for their services. OOD will still assign you to a priority group even if there is no waiting list. If there is a waiting list when you apply for services, OOD will let you know.

What Happens If a Counselor Decides You Are Not Eligible

If the counselor decides you are not eligible, the counselor should talk with you and fully explain the reason. They should also send you a letter that explains the reason. You should be told how to appeal the decision (what to do if you do not agree), and how to contact Disability Rights Ohio's Client Assistance Program (CAP). The counselor should also refer you to other community resources for help.

Again, you have the right to appeal a denial of eligibility. More information on appeals is described in **Guide 10**. If OOD is using the results of an assessment as a primary reason to deny eligibility, you should get evidence to prove you are eligible. You should think about getting another assessment. You could also get other documents, letters or reports from professionals or "experts" (such as a doctor or psychiatrist) to show you qualify for OOD's services. For example, you can ask an expert to write a letter or talk to your counselor to show you qualify for OOD services.

When to Call Disability Rights Ohio's Client Assistance Program (CAP)

The eligibility process goes smoothly for many. However, you should call the CAP if:

- ❖ OOD does not presume you are eligible when you prove you receive SSDI or SSI;
- ❖ OOD takes longer than 60 days to decide if you are eligible without your permission;
- ❖ OOD ignores important medical information you have about your disability;
- ❖ OOD does not pay for assessments you need;
- ❖ Your counselor asks you to do an assessment but you believe it is not needed;
- ❖ You are not given a choice in providers or the results of an assessment;
- ❖ You are not given accommodations you need at an assessment;
- ❖ You have other questions or concerns about an assessment;
- ❖ OOD does your trial work experience in a segregated setting; or
- ❖ OOD decides you are ineligible.

Guide 5: Choosing Your Job Goal, Services and Providers

After you are found eligible for OOD's services, you and your counselor will work together to make a plan to help you prepare for work. This plan will be in writing and is called the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Your role in making this plan is very important.

Some of the most important parts of making your plan are (1) choosing a job goal that is a good fit for you, (2) choosing Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services you need to help you reach your goal, and (3) choosing who will provide the services. Your counselor will need to approve your choice in job goal, services and providers before your plan is final.

Informed Choice

You have the right to informed choice. Informed choice means that you must be an active and full partner in the VR process. You should be active in planning and making decisions. You must have the chance to make decisions about your job goal, the help you want, and how OOD works for you.

To make good decisions, your counselor must give you information and support so that you understand the process, what services you can get and how they can help you. If you don't understand something, ask your counselor to explain it to you in a way that makes sense. You must understand what you are agreeing to and what help OOD is providing to you before you can make an informed choice. Tell your counselor your needs and interests, and explore and understand your options before you make a choice.

What is a Job Goal?

A "job goal" is the type of job you want to do, such as lawyer, teacher or customer service representative. It is sometimes called an "employment outcome" or "vocational outcome." It can be a part-time or full-time job. While a job goal is usually a job in the community, it can also be a job at home, such as self-employment. It can also be supported employment. These are described below.

When is a Job Goal a Good Fit?

You are not looking for just any job. You are looking for a job that interests you. You must also have a reasonable chance of being able to do the job based on your strengths, abilities and skills, and/or if you get training you need.

Your job goal must pay at least minimum wage and be in an integrated setting. (An integrated setting is one that includes people who have disabilities and people who do not have disabilities).

Your job goal should also have a good "labor market outlook." This means there must be enough open positions for the job you want in the city or area you want to work.

What if I Don't Know What Type of Job I Want to Do?

- ❖ Your counselor should help you explore different types of jobs. Your counselor should give you information about:
- ❖ Any businesses that OOD partners with that may be a good fit for you;
- ❖ Jobs that are in high demand in your city or area;
- ❖ How much money you may be able to make in different types of jobs;
- ❖ What types of careers may allow you to move up to higher paying jobs;
- ❖ How you may need to get ready for a job or job search; and
- ❖ Any other information you need to make a good choice about your job goal.

Your counselor can also offer you “vocational evaluations,” “community-based assessments,” “career exploration,” and other types of assessments to help you decide what job goals may be a good fit. These are services that are described in **Guide 8**.

Because students sometimes need time to explore options before deciding on a job goal, they do not have to pick a job goal before making the IPE. The counselor can list the job goal on the IPE as “Vocational Exploration of _____,” and list the jobs being explored in the blank space. Later, you can update the plan to add the job goal. This can be done for students (in high school or other training programs) ages 14 through 21 who need help choosing a job goal. This can also be done for students in college who have not decided on a job goal or declared a major (but they must pick a job goal either by their 25th birthday or by the start of the second half of their college program, whichever comes first).

Self-Employment as a Job Goal

OOD may be able to support you if you want to work for yourself (called “self-employment”), start up your own small business, or need help with keeping a business you already operate. If this applies, your IPE should say that your job goal is in self-employment, and describe what the business is and what self-employment supports you need.

Supported Employment as a Job Goal

As early as possible, your counselor should talk with you and your team about if you may need supported employment services to get and keep a job. Supported Employment services are described in **Guide 8**. They are provided to people who have the most significant disabilities who need intensive, ongoing and long-term supports to get and keep a job. If you need supported employment services, your job goal on your IPE should include “supported employment” and supported employment services should be listed as needed services.

Choosing VR Services

After you and your counselor agree on a job goal, your counselor will help you pick services you need and who will provide them. OOD offers many different services, as described in the next section (link). The services you will receive are based on your individual needs and goals, so everyone will not receive the same services. The services must be connected to your job goal. You should receive any service you need to reach your job goal.

OOD has a list called a “fee schedule” that describes some of the services it offers, how much it will pay for services, and who can provide them. It also has “policies” and “procedures” that describe some of its services. Services may be provided by OOD, community partners (often called “VR Providers”), or other resources (such as “comparable services and benefits” described in **Guide 7**).

It is important that you know that OOD must allow for exceptions to its fee schedule, policies and procedures when needed to address your disability or job-related needs. This means that if a service is not listed on OOD’s fee schedule or policies or procedures, that does not mean OOD cannot provide it. OOD must provide you any VR services that you need to reach your job goal, as long as they are allowed under federal law. Exceptions are made on case-by-case bases.

You may need to negotiate with your counselor as you choose your job goal and needed services. Justify your requests by explaining your needs and why you think your request is reasonable. Be careful to advocate for services that are supported under the law and for which you have expert or professional support.

Choosing Service Providers

After you and your counselor agree on what services you need, you will decide who you want to provide these services. You have the right to choose who will provide your services. You can search for providers online at <https://prd.ood.ohio.gov/providersearch/>. Your counselor can also provide you a list of providers that OOD uses. If the provider you want is not on the list, you can ask your counselor to contact them to see if they are willing to accept OOD’s rate of payment. If the provider is willing to do this and is qualified to provide the service, OOD may permit this provider to provide your service. OOD can also make exceptions to its rules about who can provide you services. Exceptions are made on case-by-case bases.

Problems with Service Providers

If you are not happy with a provider, you should tell your counselor as soon as possible. Your counselor should try to help fix any problems. If you are still not happy, you can ask your counselor to change to another provider if one is available. You can also ask your provider about any complaint or grievance process they have if you want to file a complaint with them.

Information Used to Approve Your Job Goal and Services

In deciding if they can approve your job goal and the services you need to reach your goal, your counselor should use, as much as possible, the information and documents they already have (such as documents they got from the Application and Eligibility process). You may be asked to help get more documents, or to sign release forms that give OOD permission to get information about you from your medical, educational or other providers.

To decide if your job goal has a good “labor market outlook,” the counselor will look at information on websites such as:

- ❖ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (<https://www.bls.gov/>);
- ❖ Ohio Labor Market Information (<https://ohiolmi.com/>);
- ❖ O*NET (<https://www.onetonline.org/>);
- ❖ OhioMeansJobs (<https://jobseeker.ohiomeansjobs.monster.com/>);
- ❖ Other online resources (such as <https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/toolkit.aspx>)
- ❖ Employer Partner Jobs List (<https://ood.ohio.gov/information-for-employers/employer-resources/employer-partner-jobs-list>);
- ❖ Local want ads; or
- ❖ Reference letters that have a guarantee to hire.

Assessments

If the counselor needs more information to decide if your choice of a job goal is a good fit, or the amount and type of VR services you may need, your counselor may ask you to do an assessment. This could include, but is not limited to:

- ❖ Medical, psychological or neuropsychological evaluation;
- ❖ Vision or hearing evaluation;
- ❖ Speech evaluation;
- ❖ Function capacity evaluation;
- ❖ Vocational evaluation;
- ❖ Community-based assessment;
- ❖ Career exploration;
- ❖ Work Incentives Planning;
- ❖ Assistive or rehabilitative technology assessment; or
- ❖ Home or vehicle modification assessment.

Again, you have the right to choose the provider for your assessment.

If you need an accommodation for your disability at an assessment, you should ask for it. OOD must make sure you get reasonable accommodations you need. Accommodations might include extended time on an assessment or scheduling it over several days, getting breaks, a sign language interpreter, personal assistance services, etc. You can tell your counselor or provider what you need. You should not have to pay for any accommodations.

OOD can pay for the assessments you need. They may also be able to pay for transportation or child care you need to be able to go to an assessment in some situations. Tell the counselor about any concerns you have about travelling or attending assessments.

What if You Disagree With Your Counselor's Request for an Assessment?

If you disagree with your counselor's request for a specific assessment, ask your counselor and/or their supervisor to discuss why they think it is needed. Give your reasons for why you believe the assessment is not needed and be ready to show why. For example, you may have outside assessment results (such as reports from your doctors) that you believe OOD should use instead.

However, if your assessment is old or your disability, functioning or needs have changed, it may be reasonable for OOD to require an updated assessment. You can also ask that any assessment be limited to only the issues OOD believes it must know before writing your IPE. If you are unable to reach a compromise and OOD still requires you to take the assessment, and you choose not to do so, there is a risk OOD may close your case for lack of cooperation. If OOD closes your case, the counselor must send you the decision in writing and you may appeal it.

What If You and Your Counselor Disagree About Your Choice in Job Goal or Services?

You have the right to appeal a denial of your choice in job goal or a VR service. Before filing an appeal, you may ask for a copy of the policy the counselor's decision is based on, ask to speak with the counselor's supervisor or the Area Manager, contact Disability Rights Ohio's Client Assistance Program (CAP) for help, and/or ask for a copy of your appeal rights. But it is very important that you file an appeal by the deadline of 30 days from the decision (even if you have not received the decision in writing). More information on appeals is in **Guide 10**.

If OOD is using the results of an assessment as a primary reason to deny your choice of job goal or services, you should provide evidence to prove the job goal is a good fit or that you need the specific service. You should consider getting another assessment or have an expert (such as a doctor, educator, psychologist, therapist, vocational evaluator, or independent living specialist) support your position. If possible, have an expert participate in a meeting with your counselor, or ask them to write a letter supporting your position. As an alternative, you can also ask that OOD send you to another assessment.

When to Call Disability Rights Ohio's Client Assistance Program (CAP)

The process goes smoothly for many. However, you should call the CAP if:

- ❖ OOD denies your choice of job goal;
- ❖ OOD will not agree to a self-employment plan;
- ❖ OOD will not agree to a supported employment plan;
- ❖ OOD denies a service you need or the amount of services you need;
- ❖ You disagree with the services offered by OOD;
- ❖ You are not given a choice of service providers;
- ❖ You disagree with the service provider OOD offers;
- ❖ Your counselor asks you to do an assessment but you believe it is not needed;
- ❖ You are not given accommodations you need at an assessment; or
- ❖ You have other questions or concerns regarding your job goal, services, or providers.

Guide 6: Deciding Who Pays for Services

Your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) will list the services you need, the costs of the services and who will pay for them. Some services are provided to you at no cost. Other services may require that you pay some costs. Sometimes OOD must look to see if other resources (called “comparable services or benefits”) can support you.

SSDI and SSI Recipients

If you receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for your disability, you are not required to pay for any services.

Anyone Else Using OOD Services

For others, you may be asked to pay costs for some services if you are able. However, you are not required to pay any costs for these services:

- ❖ Assessments to decide if you are eligible and your priority for services;
- ❖ Assessments to decide your job goal or the services you need;
- ❖ Vocational counseling and guidance
- ❖ Referral services
- ❖ Job-related services (such as job seeking skills training, job development, or on-the-job supports)
- ❖ Personal assistance services
- ❖ Interpreter services (such as sign language and oral interpreter services)
- ❖ Reader services
- ❖ Other “auxiliary aids or services” you need to receive VR services or reach your job goal

For example, if you attend college or other postsecondary educational program (and do not receive SSDI or SSI), you may have to pay for some costs of tuition, fees and books based on your income. More information on this is in [Guide 13](#).

Comparable Services or Benefits:

“Comparable Services or Benefits” are resources available under other programs or agencies that can help pay the costs of services you need, such as:

- ❖ Health insurance, Medicaid, or Medicare (for example, to pay for costs of medical treatment or supplies you need)
- ❖ Veteran’s Assistance
- ❖ Educational Grants (such as Pell Grants or Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants), non-merit scholarships, waivers, tuition exemptions, or fellowships (for example, to pay for costs of college tuition)

As you and your counselor are making your IPE, you will usually look to see if other resources like this will help to pay for some or all of the costs of your services. If other resources are available, OOD will generally require you to use them to pay for services. There are a few exceptions to this.

First, you are not required to find out if other resources can pay for these types of services:

- ❖ Assessments to decide if you are eligible and your priority for services;
- ❖ Assessments to decide your job goal or the services you need;
- ❖ Vocational counseling and guidance;
- ❖ Referral services;
- ❖ Job-related services (such as job seeking skills training, job development, or on-the-job supports);
- ❖ Rehabilitation technology; or
- ❖ Post-employment services that consist of those services above.

Second, you are not required to find out if other resources can pay for services when:

- ❖ They are not available to you when you need them;
- ❖ It would interrupt or delay your progress toward reaching your job goal;
- ❖ It would interrupt or delay an immediate job placement;
- ❖ You are at extreme medical risk without the service; or
- ❖ They are not of equal quality or type to what you would otherwise receive from OOD.

Third, these things are not “comparable services or benefits,” so OOD cannot require you to apply for or use them:

- ❖ Awards and scholarships based on merit;
- ❖ Student loans; or
- ❖ SSI’s Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS).

Even if another resource is *supposed* to pay for a service for you (for example, your school is supposed to provide you a sign language interpreter), if they are not doing so, OOD must provide you the service if needed to reach your job goal.

When to Call Disability Rights Ohio’s Client Assistance Program (CAP)

The process goes smoothly for many. However, you should call the CAP if:

- ❖ You are told you must pay for a service and you cannot afford it;
- ❖ You are asked to wait for services from another resource and this is delaying your plan;
- ❖ OOD and another agency disagree about who should pay for a service and you are caught in the middle; or
- ❖ Any other problems related to paying for services.

Guide 7: The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

After you are found eligible for OOD services, you and your counselor will work together to make a plan to help you get ready for work. This plan will be in writing and is called the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Your role in making this plan is very important. Your counselor will need to approve your plan before it is final.

Content of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) should include:

Your job goal;

The services you need to reach your job goal;

The timeline for when services will be provided and when you will reach your job goal;

Who will provide the services;

The costs of the services and who will pay for them;

How your progress toward reaching your job goal will be reviewed; and

Your and OOD's responsibilities.

How and When to Write the IPE

You can choose to write your plan or write it with help from your counselor or someone else. It must be written on a specific form, and your counselor must approve the plan before any services can begin. You must complete your plan within 90 days of your eligibility decision unless you and your counselor agree to extend the deadline to a specific date.

Your IPE will not go into effect until it has been approved and signed by you and your counselor. Your counselor should give you a copy of your final approved plan. Make sure you get a copy for your files. It can be provided to you in your native language, in large print, in Braille or on audio, if needed.

Services That Must Be Listed on the IPE

You should list all services you need on your IPE, even if OOD is not paying for them. For example, if you are attending college as part of your plan but you are paying the cost of tuition yourself, you should still list college training as a service on the IPE. You should also list services that other resources (called "comparable services or benefits") are paying for. For example, any medical treatment you need to reach your job goal should be on your IPE even if your health insurance is paying for it. Your IPE should also include services or accommodations you need to participate in OOD services, such as sign language interpreters, assistive technology, or personal assistance services.

Changing or Updating Your IPE

Your IPE is a flexible document. If your choices or needs change, your IPE may need to be changed. You can change your job goal, services or service providers. These changes are called "amendments." Your counselor must approve all changes to the IPE before the changes are final.

Your IPE will also be reviewed with you at least once per year at your “Annual Review” meeting. Your counselor is required to do an annual review to be sure that your needs are being met and that your plan is still the best plan for you. You may also ask for a review of your IPE at any time. Make sure you get a copy of any updated IPEs for your files.

When to Call Disability Rights Ohio’s Client Assistance Program (CAP)

The process goes smoothly for many. However, you should call the CAP if:

- ❖ OOD does not allow you to write your own IPE;
- ❖ Your counselor writes an IPE without your participation;
- ❖ You cannot get a copy of your IPE from your counselor;
- ❖ Your services do not begin when your IPE says they should;
- ❖ OOD stops or reduces your service and you disagree; or
- ❖ You have other questions or concerns regarding your IPE.

Guide 8: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services

OOD offers many different types of services, as described below. Again, it is important to remember that OOD must provide you any services you need to reach your job goal, as long as they are allowed under federal law. You can find OOD's policies and procedures about services on its website at <https://ood.ohio.gov/laws-rules-and-policies/policies> (use the search box to look up specific services). You can also ask for copies of policies and procedures from your counselor or the Client Assistance Program.

1. VR Counseling and Guidance

At the beginning of your Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) case, you will be assigned a counselor who should give you job counseling and career planning guidance throughout your VR case. They should also provide you information and support so you can make informed decisions.

2. Information and Referral

Your counselor can give you information about or help you get services you need from other agencies. They should also tell you about the Client Assistance Program.

3. Interpreter or Reader Services

Interpreter services help to make sure you can communicate with your counselor and others if you are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or have limited English proficiency. Reader services help those who have low-vision or blindness in reading. OOD can pay for and provide interpreter or reader services while you are working with OOD and using VR services. You and your counselor will generally look for other available resources (called "comparable services or benefits") that will help pay for costs before OOD will agree to pay. Your counselor will also help you come up with a plan for how you will receive any of these services after you are employed and your VR case is closed, such as working with a long-term supplier or your employer to accommodate your needs.

4. Personal Assistance Services

Personal assistance services help you perform daily living activities at home or at work so you can increase your skills and have more control in your life. A provider can also help you learn how to manage, supervise, and direct personal assistants. OOD can pay for and provide personal assistance services while you are working with OOD and using VR services. You and your counselor will generally look for other available resources (called "comparable services or benefits") that will help pay for costs before OOD will agree to pay. Your counselor will also help you come up with a plan for how you will receive these services after you are employed and your VR case is closed. Since personal assistance services are typically not an accommodation provided by an employer, your counselor should review with you if long-term suppliers are available. Your counselor may refer you, if appropriate, to OOD's "Personal Care Assistance Program."

5. Maintenance

OOD may be able to pay for living expenses (such as food, housing and clothing) that you have during your VR case that are beyond your normal living expenses and needed because you are participating in an eligibility assessment or VR services. Payment for these types of costs is called “maintenance.” OOD may be able to pay for the cost of things like:

Uniforms or other clothes you need for your job or job interviews or training;

Short-term costs (such as food, housing) that you need to participate in an assessment or training at a site that you cannot commute to; and

Initial one-time costs (such as security deposits or utility start-up costs) that you need if you move for a job.

You and your counselor will generally look for other available resources (called “comparable services or benefits”) that will help pay for costs before OOD will agree to pay.

6. Bridge Support Services

Bridge Support Services are short-term supports to help you overcome significant barriers to employment. You and your counselor will generally look for other available resources (called “comparable services or benefits”) that will help pay for these services before OOD will agree to do so. Bridge Support Services includes the following supports:

a) Identification (ID) Obtainment/Replacement

- i) A provider can help you get an ID (such as a driver’s license or State ID) or other documents (such as a social security card, I-9 documents) you may need for a paid work experience or employment..

b) Work Clothing Assistance

- i) A provider can help you choose and buy interview or work clothing, including help with transportation to clothing stores.

c) Community Connections

- i) A provider can help connect you with resources in your community. This could include help setting up mental health case management, childcare services, a bank account, housing, interview clothing, or applying for services with other community agencies such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants & Children Program (WIC), or Medicaid.

d) Training Preparation Support

- i) A provider can help you apply for postsecondary training (such as college) and complete any application documentation and/or FAFSA documentation when you do not have anyone else to help you.

e) Training Exploration

- i) A provider can help you research postsecondary programs, complete college entrance applications, help with college visits, help with the initial class registration, and/or visit student disability services offices, when you do not have anyone else to help you.

7. Transportation, Travel Costs, Car Repairs and Vehicle Modifications

OOD may be able to pay for the costs of travel or transportation that you need to go to assessments or to use VR services. It can also pay for transportation you need to go to work, but usually only until you receive your first paycheck or the costs are covered by someone else.

OOD may do the following:

- ❖ Purchase a bus or paratransit pass for you;
- ❖ Purchase a fuel card for you;
- ❖ Reimburse your travel mileage (when purchase of a fuel card is not feasible);
- ❖ Allow an OOD Job Developer to drive you around when using their services;
- ❖ Pay for repairs to your car (when it costs less and/or is more efficient than other transportation options and you need your car to use VR services or travel to work);
- ❖ Modify your vehicle for your disability (when it costs less and/or is more efficient than other transportation options, and you are either using VR services, ready to work, or working); and
- ❖ Pay for relocation costs (moving expenses) if you have to move because you are taking a new job.

You and your counselor will generally look for other available resources (called “comparable services or benefits”) that will help pay for transportation costs before OOD will agree to pay. But you do not have to look for other resources to pay for vehicle modifications.

8. Travel Training, Temporary Permit Tutoring and Driver’s Training

A provider can teach you how to use public transportation (such as the bus) or how to travel in your own car so you can get to work and around your community on your own and with confidence. The provider may teach you how to schedule transportation requests with a transportation company, read a bus schedule, buy bus passes, follow public transportation rules, or help you figure out what you should do if something unexpected comes up (such as, you miss your bus or get off at the wrong stop). A provider can work with you one-on-one by showing you how to use public transportation until you can do it on your own.

OOD can also provide you driver’s training when you need it because of your disability. They can also provide temporary permit tutoring you need because of your disability if no other resources are available to pay for it.

9. Orientation and Mobility Training

This service helps people with low vision or blindness learn to navigate different settings (such as work, home, school, or the community) so they can build their skills and confidence to do so on their own. The provider may use instruction techniques such as sighted-guide, long cane, or service animals. The provider may also assess the environment to plan a safe route for you.

10. Activities of Daily Living (ADL) Training (sometimes called “Rehabilitation Teaching”)

A provider will help you to learn “activities of daily living” such as choosing and organizing clothes, making meals, making budgets, managing money, and using good hygiene. The goal is for you to build your skills and confidence to be able to live and manage your life safely on your own, and help you become more employable. This service may be used if you have low vision or blindness, or another disability such as cognitive disability, traumatic brain injury, deafness or language deprivation. The provider can work with you one-on-one, and also help other people in your life learn how they can support you. The provider may also recommend equipment that would be helpful to you.

11. Services to Family Members

OOD can provide VR services to your family members when needed to allow you to reach your job goal and when you do not have resources to pay. The family member must have a big interest in your wellbeing. For example, OOD can provide interpreters, readers or personal assistance services to your family member so you can use VR services. OOD can also pay for costs such as childcare to allow you to complete an assessment or training.

12. Home Modifications

OOD can pay a provider to assess and modify your home to help you be more independent and employable. Home Modifications are only provided when you need them to use VR services or to reach your job goal.

13. Rehabilitation Technology (sometimes called “Assistive Technology”)

This service allows a provider to do several things to help you be more independent and employable:

- ❖ Assess and modify your home, school or work environment
- ❖ Assess for, fit, prescribe and purchase rehabilitation technology aids and devices; and
- ❖ Train you on how to use and care for any modified devices or technology.

14. Setup For Technology Access Readiness Training (START UP)

A provider can teach you how to use technology (such as iPad, laptops, computers) so you can participate in VR services “remotely” (such as from your home). A provider can help you with things like:

- ❖ setting up and registering your device;
- ❖ installing applications or programs you need for remote services (such as Zoom, Teams, Google Classrooms, etc.);
- ❖ setting up a user account (such as Apple ID) or a professional email address;
- ❖ connecting to wireless options (such as Wi-Fi, mobile hotspot, mobile data, or home internet);
- ❖ teaching you how to use your device and access applications and programs (such as how to login to a Zoom, TEAMS, or Google meeting);

- ❖ teaching you how to participate in a remote meeting and use the camera, mute/unmute function, closed captioning (CC), and appropriate remote etiquette (such as appropriate clothing, language, and behavior); and
- ❖ discussing online safety (such as not sharing personal information or pictures)

If other resources are available (such as Apple Support, family support), OOD will generally require you to explore them first before they will pay for this service.

15. Physical and Behavioral Health Services (sometimes called “Physical and Mental Restoration Services”)

OOD can pay for costs involved with diagnosing or treating physical or mental conditions when needed to reduce or remove barriers to employment. It will only pay for such costs when they are not covered or paid for from other resources such as health insurance or other benefits.

Examples of costs OOD can pay for include:

- ❖ Corrective surgery or therapeutic treatment in certain situations;
- ❖ Necessary hospitalization (either inpatient or outpatient care) in connection with surgery or treatment and clinic services;
- ❖ Special services for the treatment of end-stage renal disease, including transplantation, dialysis, artificial kidneys, and supplies;
- ❖ Diagnosis of and treatment for mental or behavioral health conditions;
- ❖ Mental or behavioral health services;
- ❖ Medications and supplies;
- ❖ Nursing services;
- ❖ Prosthetic and orthotic devices;
- ❖ Certain dental services;
- ❖ Eyeglasses, contact lenses, microscopic lenses, telescopic lenses, and other special visual aids;
- ❖ Vision services (such as visual training and eye examination and services you need for the prescription and provision of eyeglasses and/or lenses)
- ❖ Podiatry;
- ❖ Physical, Occupational and Speech/Language/Hearing therapy;
- ❖ Treatment of medical complications and emergencies related to the provision of physical and mental restoration services; and
- ❖ Other medical or medically related rehabilitation services.

16. Training

OOD can pay for or provide you training that you need to reach your job goal. Any training you receive will depend on the type of work you want to do. You and your counselor will generally look for other available resources (called “comparable services or benefits”) that will help pay for training costs before OOD will agree to pay. In some cases, OOD may ask you to pay for some of the costs, as well (unless you receive SSDI or SSI for your disability, in which case you should never be asked to pay for services).

The term “postsecondary training” below means education or training that you may need after high school, such as college, graduate school, or vocational school. More information on postsecondary training is in **Guide 13**.

OOD can provide or pay for many types of training or related expenses, such as:

- a) **Application fees for postsecondary training**
- b) **Tuition fees for postsecondary training**
- c) **Related expenses for postsecondary training**
 - i) Related expenses may include computers or technology, books and supplies, room and board, and/or disability programming on campus.
- d) **Tutoring**
 - i) This may include a tutor for college or vocational training classes, or for certification or licensure exams such as state tested nurse’s aide (STNA), cosmetology license, or massage licensure exam.
- e) **Computer skills training**
 - i) This may include training on how to use a computer, troubleshooting, introduction to keyboarding, and common software programs such as Microsoft Outlook, Word, and Excel.
- f) **Customer service training**
 - i) This may include training on how to use good manners with customers, answer phones, responds to letters and emails, and more.
- g) **First Aid/CPR training**
 - i) This training is designed to provide certification from either the American Red Cross or American Heart Association.
- h) **Food service training;**
 - i) This may include training on how to handle food safely, clean, prepare food, cook, take orders, use good manners with customers, handle difficult customers, and take payments for orders.
- i) **General office/medical office clerk training**
 - i) This may include training on how to make and answer telephone calls, schedule meetings, manage records, keep information private and confidential, use good manners with customers, handle difficult customers, collect payments, and give receipts.
- j) **Home health/child care training**
 - i) This may include training on basic health practices (e.g. communicable diseases), safe lifting, how to manage and give medication, and supervising adults/children.
- k) **Janitorial/Maintenance training**
 - i) This may include training on how to safely handle cleaning chemicals, use cleaning machines, properly sweep/mop areas, and greet and use good manners with customers.
- l) **Retail sales training**
 - i) This may include training on how to complete point-of-sale purchases, make change, greet and offer help to customers, handle difficult customers, and maintain product displays/shelves.

m) Warehouse/forklift training

- i) This may include training on organizational systems, order filling, operation of warehouse equipment, safety procedures in a warehouse setting, and safe operation of a forklift.

n) Occupational skills training

- i) Occupational skills training is training for occupational or vocational licenses and nationally recognized certifications in a recognized profession not previously mentioned above. This includes trainings for getting a Commercial Driver's License (CDL), real estate/insurance broker license, barber/cosmetology licenses, massage therapists, etc. In most cases these trainings will be purchased from industry recognized schools that have been accredited and/or licensed through the State of Ohio or another national credentialing board.

o) Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) Programs

- i) Several Ohio colleges and universities offer Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) Programs. CTPs provide inclusive college experiences for students with intellectual disabilities that include internships, college classes, housing and social experiences that result in improved access to gainful employment. OOD may be able to pay for some costs of these programs.

p) Other types of training you need to reach your job goal.

- i) OOD may be able to pay for other training not listed above that you need to reach your job goal. OOD may also pay for other types of training described elsewhere in this guide (for example, on-the-job training is included in "on-the-job supports" described below).

17. Assessments

OOD can provide and pay for assessments to decide if you are eligible for VR services, such as

- ❖ Medical, psychological or neuropsychological evaluations to diagnose a physical, intellectual, psychological, or cognitive disability;
- ❖ Vision or hearing exams to diagnose a visual or hearing disability;
- ❖ Speech evaluations to diagnose a communicative disability; or
- ❖ Functional capacity evaluations.

OOD can also provide and pay for assessments to decide if a job goal may be a good fit or the amount and type of VR services you may need. This could include, but is not limited to:

- ❖ Medical, psychological or neuropsychological evaluation;
- ❖ Vision or hearing evaluation;
- ❖ Speech evaluation;
- ❖ Rehabilitative technology assessment;
- ❖ Home or vehicle modification assessment;
- ❖ Vocational evaluation (described below);
- ❖ Community-based assessment (described below); or
- ❖ Career exploration (described below).

Finally, OOD can also provide assessments about how work and using VR services may affect any benefits (such as Medicaid or Social Security) you may receive or want.

This is called Work Incentives Planning and Coordination (described below).

a) Work Incentives Planning

- i) A provider will give you information on how working and using VR services will affect any benefits you may receive or want, and how you can manage your work and benefits to get the best outcome. Benefits include Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Disabled Adult Child (DAC), Health Benefits (Medicaid, Medicare, other Private or Public health benefits), Veteran's benefits, housing assistance, food assistance (SNAP), and more.

b) Work Incentives Coordination

- i) A provider will help you manage and resolve certain benefits issues or problems. They can help you with things like reporting your income; applying for or documenting work incentives; applying for a program to help you keep Medicaid called Medicaid Buy-In for People with Disabilities; helping you fix a Social Security overpayment problem, and more. They can also help you make a Plan for Achieving Self-Sufficiency (PASS). They cannot help you apply for Social Security benefits or complete a Continuing Disability Review (CDR).

c) Community-Based Assessment

- i) A provider will assess if you are ready to start work (called "job readiness"), and/or assess your skills, abilities, behaviors, and interests to decide if a specific job goal would be a good fit or what services you may need. These assessments could be a half day or full day, and done over many days, and they should be done in competitive and integrated settings, if possible.

d) Vocational Evaluation

- i) The goal of this service is to figure out what job goals may be a good fit for you. A provider may talk with you, your family members, and other people in your life (such as teachers or case managers) to ask questions about your skills, abilities, interests, and success in school. A provider may ask you to take a standardized test or look at work samples. A provider will also look at the job market in the area you want to work to make sure that jobs that you may want to do are available.

e) Vocational Consultation

- i) If your counselor needs more information to decide if your choice in job goal is a good fit, they may ask you to do a vocational consultation. They may ask you to take a test, assess your computer skills and knowledge, or look at the job market in your area to make sure that jobs that you may want to do are available.

f) Career Exploration

- i) This service lets you explore different jobs to see what may be a good fit for you, to help you decide what you want to be your job goal. A provider may talk with you, your family members, and other people in your life (such as teachers or case managers) to ask questions about your skills, abilities, interests. They may also observe you at school or work to see what skills you already have or what help you may need. You may do "informational interviews" with people or employers in jobs you may be interested in so you can learn about the job tasks, what training or education you may need, and how much money you may be able to make in that type of job. You may also do "job shadows" so you can watch employees doing different types of jobs, and if possible be allowed to try the jobs yourself.

18. Job-Related Services

Job-related services includes help getting skills to do a job search, help with job search and placement by a job developer, on-the-job supports by a job coach, and job retention services (helping you keep a job) by a job developer. Services may include the following:

a) Job Seeking Skills Training

- i) Job Seeking Skills Training helps you to get skills and resources so you can do a job search more and more on your own. You may learn how to:
 - 1) Find jobs through the newspaper, networking, online, job boards, or 'cold calling' (calling a business to ask if they are hiring);
 - 2) Register for OhioMeansJobs;
 - 3) Make a resume and cover letter;
 - 4) Prepare for an interview and do mock interviews;
 - 5) Follow up with employers after applying or interviewing;
 - 6) Handle difficult interview questions, such as how to address breaks in employment history, criminal convictions, or need for reasonable accommodations; and
 - 7) Manage your online/social media and the importance of doing so.
- ii) This service can be provided as part of the Job Development service below (called Job Development Tier I). If you are not using Job Development services because you are doing your job search on your own, you can still get this service separately.

b) Job Development

- i) Job Development helps you get skills you need to do a job search, helps you do a job search, and helps you find and keep a job. A job developer could be a provider, OOD staff or counselor, or another resource (such as a college placement officer, Ohio Means Jobs, or other recruiter or staffing agency). Job Development services can help you find long-term or "non-permanent" jobs, such as academic internships (paid or unpaid) or summer or year-round jobs for transition-age youth.
- ii) A job developer can help you to get skills and resources so you can do a job search more and more on your own (called Job Seeking Skills Training). You may learn how to:
 - 1) Find jobs through the newspaper, networking, online, job boards, or 'cold calling' (such as how to ask a job if they are hiring on the phone);
 - 2) Register for OhioMeansJobs;
 - 3) Make a resume and cover letter;
 - 4) Prepare for an interview and do mock interviews;
 - 5) Follow up with employers after applying or interviewing;
 - 6) Handle difficult interview questions, such as how to address breaks in employment history, criminal convictions, or need for reasonable accommodations; and
 - 7) Manage your online/social media and the importance of doing so.

- iii) Depending on your needs, a job developer may also take a more active role. For example, the provider may:
 - 1) Update your resume or cover letter;
 - 2) Fill out and help you fill out job applications, cover letters or resumes;
 - 3) Provide job leads for you to follow up on;
 - 4) Attend interviews with you;
 - 5) Call jobs on your behalf (such as follow up with jobs after you apply or interview);
 - 6) Talk to the employer about hiring incentives and tax credits; or
 - 7) Help you ask for and get reasonable accommodations at your job;
- iv) These activities are called Job Development Tier I (Job Seeking Skills Training & Planning) and Tier II (Job Search Assistance).
- v) Once you have a job and are “stable” on the job, your job developer will talk to you or visit you at work at least once every two weeks (unless you do not want your job developer involved with your employer). They can visit more often if you need their help. This is called Job Development Tier III (Retention).

c) On-the-Job Supports (sometimes called “Job Coaching”)

- i) A job coach can help you learn job tasks, adjust to your job, build natural and peer supports, and help you learn needed social skills. The job coach may come to your work and watch you do your job so they can give you instruction or interventions so you can better learn the job. The job coach may talk to your employer to see how you are performing and any areas you need to improve. The job coach can help you problem solve concerns.
- ii) As you learn more and adjust more to your job, your supports will usually fade out. A job coach can keep supporting you even after you can do your job on your own to make sure that you are stable in your job.

19. Job-Readiness Training

Job Readiness Training is meant to help you get skills and abilities you need to get a job (to be “job ready”). This service has two parts: working in a business and instruction. You should get a few short “rotations” or “internships” within the business so you can learn different parts of the job or job tasks. You will be with your provider (who will supervise and train you) and usually other VR participants or students. You will learn skills such as how to manage money and time, what employers expect on the job (such as good clothing, hygiene and behavior, and being on time), and how to talk to and get along with others at work. You will also build up your ability to work longer hours. As you become more ready to work (or “job ready”), your provider can help you find a job either with the business partner, or use “job development” services to help you find a different job.

There are two types of Job Readiness Training services:

- a) “School Based” Job Readiness Training is the name for this service when you use it as part of your school track. It is offered for up to nine months during your last year of school. You can get a half day or full day.
- b) “Non-School Based” Job Readiness Training is the name for this service when you are not involved with a school track. There is no timeframe for when you should complete this service but it should be based on your progress. You can get a half day or full day.

20. Work Adjustment Services

Work Adjustment services are meant to be short-term services to help you prepare for a job by improving specific “job readiness” skills (such as building up your ability to work longer hours or keeping your attention on tasks). Once you become ready to work (or “job ready”), this service ends and you should use “job development” services to help you find a job. This service focuses on specific skills you need to get a job, rather than learning the skills of a specific workplace (like you would in “job readiness training”). The place where you work does not have to be related to your job goal, since this service is just to help you build specific “job readiness” skills. You can get this service for a half day or full day.

21. Transition Services

Transition services are meant to help high school students (or students in a postsecondary or other training program) transition from school to work and other post-school goals (such as college or other training, and living on your own). They are only for youth ages 14 through 21.

Youth may still receive the other services described in this guide, but these are specific services meant to help build skills to be able to live and work on your own.

- a) Summer Youth Work Experience
 - i) Summer Youth Work Experiences allow students and youth with disabilities to work in one or two jobs so they can build work skills and behaviors. The goal is for students to identify jobs that interest them, learn how to look for jobs, be able to meet job expectations (such as quality and quantity of work, work behaviors, and more), build communication and interpersonal skills, and/or address other barriers to work. Students usually work in group sites (with at least one other participant), but can receive one-to-one support with a provider if needed to accommodate their disability related needs or a specific job goal. This service is usually between two to five weeks long, 10 to 20 hours per week.
- b) Non-Permanent Job Development
 - i) This service is meant to help students get a “non-permanent” job, such as a summer job or after-school job. Students should already have basic work skills, but may still have a need for more job training before getting a permanent job. Students will get work experience and build a work history. You can also get a job coach for “on-the-job supports” if you need it. Students are paid at least minimum wage paid by their employer.

22. Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

Students with disabilities age 14 through 21 are eligible to receive Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Students do not need to have an IEP or 504 plan to receive these services, but must have a documented disability. They must also be in an educational program (such as high school or college).

The goal of Pre-ETS is to help students get a general understanding about work and/or help figure out their career interests. Pre-ETS are designed to add to and enhance, not replace, a school's transition program. There is no cost for these services. A student may receive one or several Pre-ETS. OOD works with schools and community partners to provide Pre-ETS. These services may be provided one-on-one or in groups. They may take place during or after school hours and/or over breaks. You may get Pre-ETS at school, at a provider's office, or somewhere else in the community.

Pre-ETS include the following services:

a) Pre-ETS Coordination

- i) This services allows a provider to meet with you to gather information about you, give you information about Pre-ETS services, and help arrange or coordinate Pre-ETS services for you.

b) Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities

- i) This service allows students to explore options for postsecondary education after high school, and figure out what help they may need to go to college or other training programs. It can be provided one-on-one or in a group. Students will learn about things such as:
 - 1) Different types of degrees, certificates or licenses that they can get through colleges, universities or other adult training programs;
 - 2) Different types of courses or career options they can go after;
 - 3) Comprehensive transition or postsecondary (CTP) programs that may be available;
 - 4) Applications and admissions processes;
 - 5) Resources on college campuses such as career services and disability-services offices;
 - 6) How to get accommodations (such as interpreting services or service animals) on campus and how getting accommodations will be different than high school;
 - 7) How to pay for college and student aid options like the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or scholarships;
 - 8) How to create a budget; and
 - 9) Work incentives that may be available.

c) Job Exploration Counseling

- i) This service allows students to discuss career options and learn about in-demand jobs. It can be provided one-on-one or in a group.

i) Students will do activities such as:

- 1) Figure out where they are in the career planning process;
- 2) Figure out and list their interests (called “interest inventories”);
- 3) Research jobs and their “labor market” outlook
- 4) Talk to workers in jobs they are interested in (called “Informational Interviews”);
- 5) Register at OhioMeansJobs (OMJ) and make a “backpack;” and
- 6) Complete a Job Seekers Guide (<https://jobguide.ohioemploymentfirst.org/learn.php>).
- 7) Job Exploration Counseling

d) Instruction in Self-Advocacy

- i) This service helps students learn more about themselves and their disabilities, and learn skills to become more independent. It can be provided one-on-one or in a group. Students may:
- 1) Learn about their rights and responsibilities, such as if and how to talk about their disability with their boss and how to ask for accommodations they need in college or at work;
 - 2) Learn leadership skills to help them do well at work;
 - 3) Practice self-advocacy skills (such as asking for accommodations) in different types of settings (such as work or school);
 - 4) Talk to workers in jobs they are interested in (called “Informational Interviews”);
 - 5) Be mentored by school staff such as principals, nurses, teachers, or office staff;
 - 6) Be mentored by peers, workers or volunteers in the community; and
 - 7) Participate in youth leadership activities in school or the community;

e) Work Based Learning

- i) This service allows students to learn about the workplace, and to work in a paid or non-paid job in-school and/or after school. It can be provided one-on-one or in a group. Students may:
- 1) Learn about job duties, work expectations, job shifts, accommodations, pay, and “unwritten rules” of work;
 - 2) Learn how to behave well at a job;
 - 3) Learn how to “network” and why it is important;
 - 4) Tour a work-site or go on a field trip to a community business;
 - 5) Do a job shadow at a community business;
 - 6) Talk to workers in jobs they are interested in (called “Informational Interviews”);
 - 7) Be mentored by peers, workers or volunteers in the community; and
 - 8) Work in jobs that interest them, such as paid or unpaid internships, apprenticeships, short-term work, fellowships, or on-the-job training in the community.

f) Workplace Readiness Training

- i) This service allows students to learn and improve their social and independent living skills. This is provided in a classroom, school or community. Students may:
 - 1) Learn professional (work) skills, such as how to communicate at work with peers and supervisors, how to work with others, how to “network,” how to stay safe and healthy at work, basic customer service, how businesses are organized, how to look for jobs (“job seeking skills”) and how to meet job expectations;
 - 2) Learn personal skills, such as how to get along with others (social and interpersonal skills), having a good attitude at work, telling the truth, being responsible, being on time, managing yourself and your work well, and being a lifelong learner;
 - 3) Learn internet skills, such as safety, how social media profiles impact a job search, how other types of communication (such as email addresses and voicemail messages) can impact a job search, how to do an online job search, how to fill out online applications, and how to use the telephone well;
 - 4) Learn about independent living, such as managing money, how to make a budget, how to use good hygiene and dress well, how to get around your community, transportation, how to manage your home, and “Orientation & Mobility” training.
 - 5) Do mock interviews;
 - 6) Fill out sample applications;
 - 7) Make a sample resume; and
 - 8) Go to job fairs.
 - 9) Work Based Learning

23. Occupational Licenses, Tools, Equipment, Initial Stocks and Supplies

OOD may be able to pay costs for you to get a license you need for your job, or costs for other tools, equipment, and initial stocks and supplies you may need at work.

24. Supported Employment

As early as possible, your counselor should talk with you and your team about if you may need supported employment services to get and keep a job. Supported employment services are provided to people who have the most significant disabilities who need intensive, ongoing and long-term supports to get and keep a job. If you need supported employment services, your job goal on your IPE should include “supported employment” and supported employment services should be listed as needed services.

For youth ages 14 through 24, OOD can pay for and provide supported employment services for up to four years or until you turn age 25, whichever comes first. For all others (including those age 25 and up), OOD can pay for and provide supported employment services for up to two years. However, you may be able to get services for longer if you and your counselor agree there is a special situation that causes you to need more time to get a job.

As early as possible, you and your counselor should talk about who will provide long-term supports after your VR case is closed and how to transition to those other resources (called “extended service” providers, as described below).

Supported employment services include:

a) Supported Employment - Job Development

i) This is similar to Job Development described above, but the job developer takes on a more active role in helping you find and keep a job. For example, the job developer may:

- 1) Update your resume or cover letter;
- 2) Fill out and help you fill out job applications, cover letters or resumes;
- 3) Attend interviews with you;
- 4) Call jobs on your behalf (such as follow up with jobs after you apply or interview);
- 5) Talk to the employer about hiring incentives and tax credits;
- 6) Help you ask for and get reasonable accommodations at your job; and
- 7) Talk with employers about possible customized employment options and try to “carve out” jobs for you (see “Customized Employment” described below).

ii) Once you are considered “stable” on the job, your provider will talk to you or visit you at work at least once every two weeks (unless you do not want your provider to speak with your employer). They can visit more often if you need their help.

b) On-the-Job Supports (sometimes called “Job Coaching”)

i) This service is the same as “On-the-Job Supports” described above.

c) Customized Employment

i) Customized employment is a way to get a job through a relationship between you and an employer to meet both of your needs (your strengths and your employer’s business needs). It is provided to people who have significant disabilities who may not have gotten a job through other more general ways (such as finding job openings and applying).

ii) A provider may work with you to explore jobs. Once you find a job you like, the provider may talk with the employer about possible customized employment options. This means they work with the employer to come up with creative ways you may be able to work there. For example, the provider may work with the employer to create a new job description or new job task, or change a current one, so that the job task meets the needs of you and your employer. This is sometimes called “carving out” a job for you.

d) “Extended Services”

i) Extended services are long-term ongoing supports (such as transportation or on-the-job supports) you may need at your job. They can be paid for and provided by OOD for youth with the most significant disabilities for up to four years or until they turn age 25, whichever comes first.

ii) For all others (including youth after they turn age 25), these supports must be paid for and provided by other resources (such as the county board of developmental disabilities, Medicaid waivers, your employer, friends or family, or others). You and your counselor should talk about if you will need long-term supports, who will provide them, and how you will transition supports from OOD to these other resources (“extended service” providers) once your VR case is closed.

25. Self-Employment

OOD may be able to support you if you want to work for yourself (called “self-employment”), start up your own small business, or need help with keeping a business you already operate. If this applies, your IPE should say that your job goal is in self-employment, describe what the business is, and what self-employment supports you need. OOD cannot be an ongoing investor in a business, but offers the following services:

- a) Business Concept
 - i) This service helps you and OOD figure out if you are ready for and are able to pursue self-employment, and figure out if your business idea is ready or if it needs more development before being evaluated.
- b) Feasibility Study
 - i) A feasibility study determines whether your business idea is feasible (whether it is likely to succeed).
- c) Business Plan Writing
 - i) A Business Plan is a document that describes the core business activities, objectives, goals, and how the business will achieve its goals. A Business Consultant helps you develop your Business Plan.
- d) Business Plan Analysis
 - i) A Business Plan Analysis is done if you come to OOD with a Business Plan already made, and OOD needs a professional or second opinion of it.
- e) Technical Assistance
 - i) You can also receive technical assistance if you need one-on-one help with running your business, such as reviewing agreements or contracts, marketing, merchandising, inventory procurement or management, accounting, or strategic planning. Your business consultant could provide you technical assistance, or they may refer you to other local qualified entities.
 - ii) Finally, if you are blind and are interested in both food services and self-employment, OOD can provide you information about and decide if you are eligible for the Business Enterprise Program. More information about this program is at <https://ood.ohio.gov/about-us/programs-and-partnerships/business-enterprise-program>.

f) Other Goods and Services

OOD can provide or pay for any other good or service you need to reach your job goal.

27. Post-Employment Services

Post-employment services are services you need after you get a job. Post-employment services can be any of the other services listed above. OOD can provide you post-employment services up until your case is closed, or sometimes after your case is closed if you do not need a lot of help to get back on track and your case was closed not too long ago. If your case was closed and you are not eligible for post-employment services, you can just reapply to OOD to open a new case.

Guide 9: Closing Your Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Case

Case Closure with a Job

After you start working, your counselor will meet with you (and your employer, if you want) to make sure you are in an appropriate work setting. Generally, your VR case will be closed after you have worked successfully for at least 90 days and do not need VR services anymore. You and your counselor must both agree that you have met your job goal and are doing well in your job. Before you agree to close your case, make sure you are doing well and are comfortable in your job. You should also talk to your counselor about any service you think you might need in the future to keep your job.

Case Closure without a Job

Your counselor can also decide to close your case for other reasons before the job goal is met. Some of these reasons include: they believe you are not engaged, not cooperating, not able to make progress, or no longer eligible.

Right to Appeal Case Closure

If you do not agree with a decision to close your case, you have the right to appeal. When your counselor closes your case, you should get a letter saying that your case will be closed, how you can continue to get help if you need it, and how to appeal a decision to close your case if you do not think your case should be closed.

Going Back to OOD After Case Closure

After your case is closed, you can go back to OOD for more help. For example, if your situation changes at work, you are having trouble keeping your job, or you have lost your job, you can call OOD again to ask for services to help you keep your job, regain your job, advance in your job, or move to a better job.

OOD can do one of two things. If you do not need a lot of help to get back on track and your case was closed not too long ago, OOD may be able to re-open your case and give you “post-employment services.” If you need a lot of help or your case has been closed too long, you may be asked to reapply for services to open a new case.

When to Call Disability Rights Ohio's Client Assistance Program (CAP)

The process goes smoothly for many. However, you should call the CAP if:

- ❖ You do not agree with a decision to close your case;
- ❖ Your case was closed and you have questions about getting OOD services again;
- ❖ OOD does not provide you post-employment services you need; or
- ❖ You have other questions or concerns about your VR case.

Guide 10: Your Right to Appeal

What can I do if I disagree with a decision my counselor made about my case or services? You can appeal any Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) action or decision that affects your eligibility, your employment goal, the provision or denial of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services, or a decision to close your case. An appeal is saying that you disagree with the decision and want someone with more authority to review it.

How do I file an appeal?

You must file an appeal in writing within 30 days of the notification about the action or decision. If you received notice in writing (letter or email), your 30-days begins when the letter is postmarked or the email is sent.

The appeal must be sent to the OOD executive director in writing by mail or email:

- ❖ Email: appeals@ood.ohio.gov
- ❖ Mail: Director Kevin Miller, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, 150 E. Campus View Blvd., 3rd Floor, Columbus, OH 43235.

Your counselor can give you a form you can use to file an appeal. A copy of this form is available at the following link: <https://ood.ohio.gov/laws-rules-and-policies/forms/appeal-process-overview>

However, you are not required to use this form. You can simply write a short statement saying that you are appealing the decision made by your counselor, and describe the action or decision you are appealing (i.e., I am appealing my counselor's decision to close my case, deny me training, deny my request for a bus pass, etc.).

Does my counselor have to give me their decision in writing?

It depends. Some decisions must be given to you in writing, while others can be told to you verbally (such as over the phone).

You must receive the decision in writing when your counselor: (1) decides if you are eligible for OOD services, (2) decides your priority category, (3) reduces, suspends (puts on hold), or stops your services, or (4) closes your VR case.

Regardless of whether you receive the decision in writing or not, you must still appeal within 30 days, so it is a good idea to appeal or ask for the appeal form and file it right away. Your counselor must give you your appeal rights and the appeal form when they become aware that you disagree with one of their decisions.

What happens after I file an appeal?

OOD must do a few of things. First, OOD will schedule a fair hearing. OOD should mail you a letter setting a date and time for this fair hearing. It will be held within 60 days from when OOD receives your appeal. If you cannot attend the hearing at the scheduled date and need to reschedule it, you should contact OOD as soon as you can. The hearing date can be rescheduled if OOD agrees or if you show good cause for needing to reschedule.

Second, OOD will generally offer you an “informal administrative review” before the fair hearing. An OOD supervisor will contact you to offer to schedule this with you. Participating in an informal administrative review is voluntary. If you agree to participate, it will be held within 21 days from when OOD receives your appeal.

Third, OOD must inform you about “mediation.” OOD should give you information about mediation in the letter that sets your fair hearing date and time. As described further below, you have the right to ask for mediation any time before the Fair Hearing.

What is an “informal administrative review”?

The “informal administrative review” is a meeting held with a supervisor from OOD (who has not been involved in your case) to discuss your concerns and try to resolve them. The meeting is held either in-person (usually at your local OOD office), by phone, or by videoconference. Your counselor and their supervisor will also be invited. You can bring a friend, advocate or other person to help or support you at this meeting. Participating in this meeting is optional, but can be a worthwhile way to try resolve the disagreement informally. If this meeting does not result in resolution, you may still choose to go to a Fair Hearing.

Within 7 days after the informal administrative review meeting, the OOD supervisor who held the meeting will send you a letter with their decision about your appeal. They will either offer a solution to address your disagreement(s) or tell you that they do not have a solution.

You then decide if you will accept any offered solution, or not.

- ❖ If you accept the solution, you must withdraw your appeal. A request to withdraw the appeal must be sent in writing to the OOD director either by email to appeals@ood.ohio.gov, or by signing the “Withdrawal of Appeal” form provided to you with the letter (also available at the following link: <https://ood.ohio.gov/static/Policies/80-VR-12.C%20Withdrawal%20of%20Appeal.docx>). Withdrawing your appeal means your case will not go to fair hearing and there will be no further review of the decision(s) that led to the appeal.
- ❖ If you decide not to withdraw your appeal, your fair hearing will be held as scheduled.

What is “mediation”?

“Mediation” is a confidential process in which a neutral trained mediator (who is not an OOD employee) works with both sides to try to resolve the appeal. It is voluntary for both sides, meaning that mediation will only be held if both you and OOD agree to participate. If mediation is agreed to by both you and OOD, mediation must be held before the fair hearing. If mediation resolves your appeal, then your fair hearing will be canceled. If it does not resolve the appeal, your fair hearing will be held as scheduled. You can ask for mediation by contacting OOD’s Legal Department at 614-438-1289 or at the email or mailing address above.

What is the “fair hearing”?

A “fair hearing” is a formal hearing held in-person in Columbus, Ohio, or through videoconference. It is held before an impartial hearing officer who will decide if OOD’s decision was right or wrong (if the law supports the decision that was made). Both you and OOD can present documents as evidence, call witnesses to testify, and cross-examine each other’s witnesses. All witness testimony is under oath (witnesses must swear to tell the truth) and the hearing is recorded. OOD is represented by an attorney from the Attorney General’s office. You have the right to be represented by your own attorney. If you do not have an attorney, you can represent yourself at this hearing. You also have the option of giving your position and arguments in writing instead of showing up in-person at the hearing.

Before the hearing starts, you and OOD will give each other the documents you intend to present at the hearing (your proposed exhibits). If you are attending the hearing by videoconference, you should email your documents before the hearing starts. If you are attending the hearing in-person, you should bring 5 copies of any documentation. If you or your witnesses decide to participate in the hearing by videoconference, you should also make sure that you are able to use and connect to the videoconference software before the hearing.

You may ask OOD to issue a subpoena to a person you want to appear as a witness. All subpoena requests must include the person’s name, address and county of residence. You must provide this information to OOD at least 15 business days before the hearing.

The fair hearing generally starts with you and OOD’s attorney making opening statements. Then you and OOD’s attorney will present and question witnesses and present exhibits, and end the hearing by giving closing arguments. Within 30 days of the hearing (or final closing statements are received), the Hearing Officer will issue a final, written decision.

What if I do not agree with the fair hearing decision?

You may bring a civil action for review of the decision in an appropriate state court or federal district court. Any party bringing a civil action must serve notice on the other party. Courts have generally held that a civil action must be filed within fifteen days after mailing of the hearing officer’s decision. Disability Rights Ohio recommends consulting with an attorney about bringing a civil action in state or federal court.

How can I prepare for my appeal?

You should review the information in your case file. You or your representative have the right to ask for and review most of your case record. You should ask your counselor for a copy of your case file in writing.

You also have the right to ask for copies of any policies, procedures, memos or directives that the counselor used in making the decision. For example, if your counselor denies your request for car repairs, you should ask for a copy of any policy or procedure that mentions car repairs. A copy of all OOD policies can also be found on their website at:

<https://ood.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ood/laws-rules-and-policies/policies>.

You should be prepared to clearly say what you need and want, your concerns and possible solutions. Have a clear idea of what you will or will not accept as a solution to your problem. Focus on issues, not emotions. Extreme anger or emotions can get in the way of getting what you need. Take a break if needed.

Bring documents or witnesses (such as people who know you and can support what you are asking for) that will support your position.

What happens to my services once I file an appeal?

OOD is generally not allowed to reduce, suspend (put on hold), or stop your VR services until a fair hearing decision is made or the appeal is resolved informally.

What if I need accommodations to participate in the informal administrative review, mediation or fair hearing?

If you need any accommodations due to a disability, such as interpreter services, reading, transportation, and/or attendant services, you should ask for those accommodations ahead of time. OOD may pay for these accommodations if they are determined to be disability-related and necessary for you to fully participate. For the informal, ask either your counselor or whoever contacts you to schedule the informal administrative review. For the fair hearing, send the request to OOD's executive director by mail or email at the address above.

What can I do if I am I believe I am being discriminated against by OOD?

You may file a civil rights complaint with OOD's Division of Human Resources, Equal Employment Opportunity office by calling 1-800- 282-4536. More information is available at <https://ood.ohio.gov/static/Policies/50-EEO-03+EEO.pdf>. You may also file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. More information is located online at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr>.

How can Disability Rights Ohio help?

Through its Client Assistance Program (CAP), Disability Rights Ohio advocates for and protects the rights of individuals with disabilities who are applying for or receiving VR services from OOD. The CAP can provide self-advocacy help, information, advice, negotiation, and, when appropriate, individual legal representation and advocacy. For more information, see **Guide 1**.

What other resources are available about VR appeals?

Federal law and regulations:

- ❖ 29 U.S.C. § 722(c)
- ❖ 34 C.F.R. § 361.57
- ❖ All VR rights are in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34, Part 361, State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program. A copy of the regulations is available at <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-III/part-361>

OOD law and regulations:

- ❖ Ohio Admin. Code 3304-2-62 ("Vocational rehabilitation appeals"): <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrative-code/rule-3304-2-62>
- ❖ Ohio Administrative code sections governing OOD: <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrative-code/3304>

OOD policies and forms:

- ❖ VR Appeals policy: <https://ood.ohio.gov/static/Policies/80-VR-12+Vocational+Rehabilitation+Appeals.pdf>
- ❖ VR Appeal form: <https://ood.ohio.gov/static/Policies/80-VR-12.A+Appeal+Form.docx>
- ❖ VR Appeal Process overview: <https://ood.ohio.gov/laws-rules-and-policies/forms/appeal-process-overview>
- ❖ OOD's VR policies: <https://ood.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/ood/laws-rules-and-policies/policies>

Guide 11: Tips

This guide contains suggestions to help you be more successful when working with OOD.

Communicate with your counselor or providers

- ❖ Before meetings, let your counselor or provider know if you need an accommodation (such as a sign language interpreter) or foreign language interpreter;
- ❖ Keep scheduled meetings and let your counselor or provider know as soon as possible if you need to reschedule;
- ❖ Ask your counselor about the best way to reach them (office phone, cell phone or email) and when is best time to call;
- ❖ Tell your counselor and providers about the best way to reach you;
- ❖ Tell your counselor and providers about any changes in your address, phone number or email;
- ❖ Tell your counselor and providers if you need letters or emails in another format, such as in Braille or translated to another language;
- ❖ Make sure you return all calls and emails to your counselor or providers; and
- ❖ If you call your counselor and they are not in the office, leave a message or send an email.

Stay in touch with your counselor throughout your VR case

- ❖ Stay in touch with your counselor at least once a month;
- ❖ Know what you need and ask for help if you don't think you are getting it;
- ❖ Tell your counselor when you start working at a new job;
- ❖ Stay in touch with your counselor while working so they can help with any problems;
- ❖ Tell your counselor if you need to make changes in your job or work setting;
- ❖ If you think you might lose your job, tell your counselor as soon as possible so they can help you -- don't wait until it is too late; and
- ❖ Remember that OOD may close your case if you do not cooperate with or maintain contact with your counselor.

Know your rights and responsibilities

- ❖ Read the document given to you by your counselor that describes your rights and responsibilities;
- ❖ Talk to your counselor about your responsibilities and ask questions if you are not sure what is required of you;
- ❖ Read everything you are asked to sign;
- ❖ Ask your counselor to explain paperwork;
- ❖ Before meetings, make a list of your questions;
- ❖ Ask questions about anything you don't understand and keep asking questions until you are sure you have enough information to make good decisions;
- ❖ Take someone with you to meetings to take notes or help you advocate (It is usually a good idea to tell your counselor or provider before a meeting if you plan to bring an advocate, expert, or attorney to the meeting); and
- ❖ Remember that you can designate someone to take part in your VR case (be your "representative"). It could be a family member, guardian, advocate, or other person. It is a good idea to make a request to designate someone in writing. You will also need to sign a consent form so OOD can give information to that person.

Be an active partner with your counselor

- ❖ Be sure you understand your plan and what you are asked to do;
- ❖ Actively participate in your plan and finding work; and
- ❖ Follow your counselor's suggestions and develop job leads yourself.

Be organized

- ❖ Keep a calendar and mark scheduled meetings or phone calls;
- ❖ Take notes during meetings;
- ❖ At the end of any meeting, know what both you, your counselor or your provider must do next;
- ❖ Keep notes of phone calls with your counselor or providers (write down the date and time, who you spoke with and what was said);
- ❖ Keep all emails that you send to, or receive from, your counselor or provider;
- ❖ Ask your counselor for copies of your paperwork; and
- ❖ Keep a file to put your notes, emails, and paperwork about your VR case.

Calmly handle problems and concerns

- ❖ If you think there are delays in your case, call or email your counselor and ask what you can do to make sure your case moves forward promptly;
- ❖ Give your counselor or provider time to return phone calls and emails;
- ❖ Remember that some issues take more than one meeting to resolve;
- ❖ If there is not enough time to resolve your concerns at your meeting, it may be helpful to end the meeting and reschedule when everyone has enough time to commit;
- ❖ It is normal to feel emotional during meetings - try to remain calm and focus on issues;
- ❖ If needed, take a break before your emotions get the best of you and hurt your cause;
- ❖ Do not send a letter or email to your counselor or provider that you wrote when you were angry - take time to cool off so that your letter is written in a calm and clear way;
- ❖ If your counselor tells you no or you disagree with their decision, ask for the VR policy the decision is based on;
- ❖ Politely contact the supervisor and/or area manager if you still disagree with your counselor about an issue; and
- ❖ Remember to file an appeal by the deadline, as needed.
- ❖ Remember to call Disability Rights Ohio's CAP if you have questions or need help.

Guide 12: Transition Planning and Services

This guide provides information about transition planning for students with disabilities who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). It focuses on transition supports offered by schools and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD).

If you are a student with a disability who does not have an IEP, it is important to remember that even if your *school* is not required to provide you transition services or go through this transition planning process, you may still be eligible for transition or employment services from other agencies (such as OOD or the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD)). For example, students with disabilities do not need to have an IEP or 504 plan to receive Pre-Employment Transition Services or other OOD services.

What is transition planning?

Transition planning is a process to help students with disabilities get ready for life after high school. It helps you decide what you want to do after high school (your adult life goals), how to get there (what services you need), and provides services to help you reach your goals. Transition planning should start when you turn 14 years old.

Transition planning is done in your Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meeting. It is important that you take part in transition planning. Some of the most important parts of your plan are deciding (1) your “postsecondary goals” after high school, and (2) what “transition services” you need to reach your goals. These will be written down in the “Postsecondary Transition” section of your IEP.

All transition planning is based on age-appropriate assessments of your transition needs. Your school will arrange for these assessments, and the assessments will provide information to your IEP team to help the team develop goals and decide on necessary services to meet the goals.

What are postsecondary goals?

Postsecondary goals are what you want to do after high school. Your IEP should have three types of goals:

1. Postsecondary Training and Education (such as college, vocational training or learning a trade, or other education programs);
2. Competitive Integrated Employment (getting a job or employment); and
3. Independent living (living on your own).

Your goals must be written in your IEP. Also, it is okay to change your mind about your goals. You can review and change your goals as needed by updating your IEP. Your goals will likely become more specific over time as you start to get a better idea of what you are interested in. For example, if you want to work with animals, it might start with “Student (you) will be employed in a job working with animals”, but as you get a better understanding of your interests and skills, it may become something more specific like “Student (you) will work as a marine biologist.”

What are transition services?

Once you write down your postsecondary goals, your IEP team will decide what “transition services” you need to reach your goals. Transition services are extra supports you get from your school or other agencies to help you get ready for life after high school (such as going to college or getting a job). You may get transition services from age 14 through 21. The services you will get are based on your needs, interests and goals, so everyone will not get the same services.

Transition services may include:

- ❖ Instruction (such as special education);
- ❖ Assistive technology;
- ❖ Community experiences, such as volunteer work;
- ❖ Career counseling and vocational evaluations, such as helping you figure out what job might be a good fit for you;
- ❖ Job exploration and development, such as helping you get a short-term job (like a summer or after-school job) to give you practice in getting and keeping a long-term job;
- ❖ College counseling, such as making sure you take the right classes, helping you understand what extra help you can get in college, helping you find a college that is right for you, and helping you prepare for any college entrance exams;
- ❖ Teaching you skills you will need to live on your own (daily living skills); and
- ❖ “Related services” such as transportation, speech language therapy, personal care aides, social work, or therapeutic recreation.

Your services must be written in your IEP. Again, it is okay to update your plan to change your services. You can review and change your services as needed by updating your IEP.

How does transition planning work?

In Ohio, schools must begin transition planning when you turn 14. If appropriate, you can start before you turn 14. At age 14, the IEP team will decide on your postsecondary goals and what services you need to help you make a successful transition from high school to life after high school (such as college, working, and/or living on your own). At age 14, you should be sure you are taking the right classes to help you reach your goals after high school. For example, if you plan to go to college, you may want to take some advanced-placement or college prep classes in high school. If you plan to go to a vocational school, you may want to focus on a vocational education program. You can also start exploring Pre-Employment Transition Services offered by OOD at age 14, as described below.

Your school must address transition planning every year. As you get older, you should be sure you get transition services you need to help you reach your goals after high school. This might include some job experiences or working on the skills you need to have to go to college. The IEP team will figure out what transition services you need and write these in your IEP. The team will also decide what agencies will be responsible for providing transition services and write this in the IEP.

The law allows students with disabilities to attend school until they reach the age of 22 if they need to attend longer to learn skills that they will need to meet their transition goals. Your school should talk with you about whether you need more time to graduate or meet your transition goals.

Who is responsible for transition planning?

Your school is responsible for your transition plan and providing your transition services. Specifically, your “school district of residence” is responsible. School district of residence means the school district where your parents live, a community school if you go to a community school, the last school district that your parents lived if you do not know where they live now, or a school district named by a court.

Who schedules a transition planning meeting?

Your school must schedule an IEP meeting to discuss transition. The school must send you and your parents (if you are under age 18) a letter about this meeting saying when it will take place. If other agencies need to attend the meeting, the school must invite those agencies to the meeting.

Who should attend a transition planning meeting?

The school must invite you to a transition planning meeting. You should attend if you can because it will help make sure your goals and interests are considered, give you some control over the plan, and help you feel more responsible for carrying it out. Being involved should also help you learn about your strengths and skills, and your disability and its impact on learning, work, and living on your own. You may also learn about the accommodations you will need at a job, in further education, or in the community. If you cannot attend the transition planning meeting, your school must still consider your goals and interests. They can ask you to write them down to share with the team, or ask your parents to share them.

If you are under age 18, the school must invite your parent or guardian to the meeting. Students with disabilities are allowed to attend school until they graduate or turn 22. Once you turn 18, though, the rights as a student with disabilities transfer to you, including the right to transition planning and services. Beginning at least one year before you turn 18, the school must inform you that the rights will transfer to you at age 18.

The members of your IEP team will also be present at the meeting to discuss transition. There may also be people from other agencies at your meeting because transition services can be provided by your school and other agencies.

Your school should invite a counselor from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD). OOD is Ohio’s Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency. OOD’s goal is to help people with disabilities get ready for, find and keep jobs. Keep in mind that even if you are unsure if you want to work or what type of job you may want to do, it is still a good idea to invite an OOD counselor to your meeting because OOD can offer you services to help you make decisions about whether you want to work and what type of job may be a good fit.

An OOD counselor should also be invited if you plan to go to college or another educational or vocational program after high school because OOD may be able to help you explore postsecondary options, support you through college, and help pay for some college costs (such as tuition, technology, books or other supplies, etc.). OOD should have a counselor called a “Transition Liaison” assigned to your school district who can help make sure someone from OOD attends your meeting.

Other agencies, providers or community partners that can offer transition services to you should also be invited to attend. This could include a:

- ❖ County social worker;
- ❖ County board of developmental disabilities staff;
- ❖ Independent Living Center staff;
- ❖ Service providers (such as job coaches or day service providers);
- ❖ Disability support staff from a college or vocational program;
- ❖ Someone who knows about assistive technology;
- ❖ Someone who knows about financial benefits such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Medicaid;
- ❖ Personal care or health care providers, including mental health care providers;
- ❖ Probation officer or teacher from a juvenile justice center;
- ❖ Community park and recreation staff; and/or
- ❖ Transportation agency staff.

Transition services must be provided by people with the knowledge, training and experience needed to meet your transition needs. It is important for these people to be involved in the planning process.

Do I Need to Submit an Application to Receive Transition Services from Other Agencies?

Other agencies or service providers generally have their own criteria for eligibility. This means you may have to apply for their services. Some may have a waiting list for services. If you want to apply for services, your transition plan should include information about who will submit the application and who will follow-up. It is a good idea to pick one person to be a contact person and coordinator for the team.

If you want services from Opportunities from Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), you have two options:

1. If you only want OOD services called “Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)” or are unsure if you want to apply to OOD to open a case, your school can submit a “Request for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)” form (<https://ood.ohio.gov/laws-rules-and-policies/forms/request-for-pre-ets-form>). You must sign this form, and your parent or guardian must also sign if you are under age 18. Signing the form means you are giving the school and OOD permission to release information about you to each other. You should also say on the form what Pre-ETS service and provider you want. After you ask for Pre-ETS, OOD will make sure you are eligible to receive the service. If so, a provider will then contact you (and your parent or guardian if you are under age 18) to schedule services.
2. You can apply to OOD, as described in the **Guide 3**.

If you submit a Request for Pre-ETS form, you are only able to receive Pre-ETS. If you apply for OOD services and are found eligible, you are eligible for the full scope of services that OOD offers (including Pre-ETS) depending on your needs and goals.

Deciding whether to apply to OOD depends on what services you need (whether you need more than Pre-ETS), and an OOD counselor should give you information and supports to help you decide what makes sense for you. We generally recommend students who are interested in getting other OOD services beyond Pre-ETS or students who are close to finishing high school apply to OOD so they can receive more help.

What are Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)?

Pre-ETS are services paid for by OOD. The goal of Pre-ETS is to help students get a general understanding about work and/or help figure out their career interests. Pre-ETS are designed to add to and enhance, not replace, a school's transition program. There is no cost to you for these services. There are multiple Pre-ETS services, and you may receive one or several or all of them.

Pre-Employment Transition Services include the following services:

- ❖ Pre-ETS Coordination
- ❖ Counseling on Postsecondary Opportunities;
- ❖ Job Exploration Counseling;
- ❖ Instruction in Self-Advocacy;
- ❖ Work Based Learning; and
- ❖ Workplace Readiness Training.

More information about these services is in **Guide 8**.

What Other Transition Services Does OOD offer?

OOD offers several other transition services, in addition to Pre-ETS. It is important to remember that transition services are services specifically designed for youth ages 14 through 21 to help build skills you need to be able to live and work on your own. If you apply for OOD services, you may also receive the other OOD services described in **Guide 8**, depending on your needs and goals (such as vocational evaluations, technology, job readiness training, job development, on-the-job supports, transportation, travel training, etc.). Transition services include:

1. Basic skill development activities such as:
 - a. Utilizing the "Student's Learning Kit" on <https://ohiomeansjobs.ohio.gov/for-students/explore-careers/students-learning-kit>;
 - b. Utilizing the "Employment First Job Seeker Guide" on <https://jobguide.ohioemploymentfirst.org/learn.php>;
 - c. Interviewing or job shadowing family or friends;
 - d. Volunteering;
 - e. Extra-curricular activities; and
 - f. Exploring activities available through school (e.g. job training, shadowing);
2. Summer Youth Work Experience, as described in **Guide 8**; and
3. Non-Permanent Job Development, as described in **Guide 8**.

Where are transition services provided?

Some transition services take place at school. Often (especially after you turn 16) services take place at home or the community (such as job sites). For example, if your goal is to get a job after high school, you may have vocational training as part of the high school day. You may go to school in the mornings to go to classes and go to a job site in the afternoon. If your goal is to participate in your community, you may do community activities as part of the school day. OOD's services can also be provided over the summer, after school hours and/or over breaks.

What if you do not receive transition services?

If an outside agency does not provide transition services that are described in your IEP, the school must get the IEP team together for a meeting to figure out other ways to meet your transition goals. This may include having another agency or school personnel provide the service. Your school district must make sure that you get the services at no cost to you.

If your school does not do transition planning or does not provide you transition services, the school has violated the law. You should request an IEP meeting to ask that the transition planning and services be provided. Contact the school special education director to request the IEP meeting.

If the school still does not provide an IEP meeting or you cannot resolve a disagreement about transition planning and services through IEP meetings, you can file a complaint or ask for an impartial due process hearing. Both the complaint and request for hearing must be in writing. For information about filing a complaint and impartial due process requests, you can contact: Ohio Department of Education, Office of Exceptional Children at 1-877-644-6338
Your special education director for a copy of your rights
Disability Rights Ohio: 614-466-7264, press option 2.

If you have a dispute with OOD, you have appeals rights, as described in **Guide 10**.

Where can I find more information?

- ❖ Ohio Employment First: https://ohioemploymentfirst.org/view.php?nav_id=451
- ❖ Ohio Department of Education: <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education>
- ❖ Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities
 - <https://ood.ohio.gov/information-for-individuals/services/student-services/high-school/pre-employment-transition-services>

Guide 13: Postsecondary Training

This fact sheet explains the rights people with disabilities have when they want help from Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) for postsecondary training.

What is postsecondary training?

Postsecondary training is education or instructional training that you may need after you complete high school or receive your GED. It allows you to get a degree (associate's, bachelor's, master's or professional), a license or a professional certificate. It can include many kinds of educational programs, including:

- ❖ two- and four-year college degree programs,
- ❖ graduate college or graduate university training,
- ❖ and vocational schools or technical institutes.

Postsecondary training includes both instruction and related expenses (such as books and supplies).

Will OOD support me in getting postsecondary training?

Possibly. After you and your OOD counselor (sometimes called a "VR counselor" or "VRC") agree on your job goal (or "employment outcome"), you will discuss with your counselor what services or training you need to reach that goal. If you and your counselor agree that your job goal requires training or certification beyond a high school diploma or GED, then OOD can provide support for postsecondary training. This does not mean OOD will pay for all of the costs of postsecondary training. You can read more details below.

If OOD agrees that I need postsecondary training, will OOD pay for it?

It depends. OOD can pay for tuition and related expenses that you need to obtain your degree, license or professional certificate.

- ❖ If you receive Social Security benefits (SSI or SSDI), OOD will pay these costs in full.
- ❖ If you do not receive Social Security benefits, you will be asked to pay your "Expected Family Contribution" before OOD will pay any costs. Your Expected Family Contribution is listed on a form called the "Student Aid Report (SAR)" that you will receive after you complete your "Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)" form. If you are unable to pay your Expected Family Contribution, please contact Disability Rights Ohio for advice.

Everyone attending a postsecondary educational institution must complete the FAFSA and provide the counselor with the Student Aid Report (SAR). Students must also seek out and try and stay eligible for federal educational grants - such as the Ohio College Opportunity Grant or the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant - before OOD will pay expenses (with some exceptions). Students also must not be in default on student loans (with some exceptions). If your educational institution does not participate in the Federal Financial Aid Program, you may still be asked to submit a FAFSA, or your program may be able to be covered under a different OOD service criteria.

If OOD does not pay for my tuition, can it still provide other support?

Yes, depending on your situation, OOD could still pay for related expenses required by your training program, such as books and supplies, transportation expenses, computers and assistive technology, assessments of your need for assistive technology, and more.

Can I choose the school I want to attend?

Yes, but you may have to pay additional costs, depending on the school you choose. OOD will only pay for the amount it would cost for you to attend the closest “least cost” school that would meet your needs in relation to your job goal or disability. If you choose a school that is not the “least cost” (e.g., out-of-state, in-state but higher cost), you would need to pay the difference in costs between the schools. However, if the “least cost” school would not be able to meet your needs, you can ask OOD to make an exception and help pay for the costs at your alternate school.

Will OOD pay for me to live on campus?

Yes, but only if you need to live on campus because of your disability or program. OOD will also only pay up to the amount for room and board at the “least cost” school that would have been able to meet your needs.

If OOD is paying for my postsecondary training, what are my responsibilities?

You must attend school full time unless you are granted permission to attend part time. You must maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average for most programs. For a graduate college or a graduate university training program, you will need to meet the same grade standards required to graduate from that school. You must tell your counselor about any problems you are having during the semester and provide required documents such as your grades, course schedule, bills for postsecondary expenses, list of courses you need to take to earn your degree, etc. Your counselor will give you a complete list of what you need to turn in.

What happens if I need to retake or drop a class?

You may have to pay to take the class again yourself. If you failed a class, received a grade less than a 2.0, or withdrew from class after the deadline, OOD generally will not pay for you to retake the class unless there are “extenuating circumstances” (for example, you withdrew from the class because of your disability or an unexpected event like a major surgery).

Do I have to obtain my degree within a certain timeframe?

Usually, yes, but there are exceptions. You have to complete one academic year within 18 consecutive months. Also, if you are trying to get your associate’s degree, you have to graduate within three years, and if you are trying to get your bachelor’s degree, you have to graduate within six years. You may be granted an extension of these timelines in limited situations if you can show you can get back on track to graduate.

Can I take courses during the summer to help me graduate on time?

Not typically, but exceptions can be made. For example, you can take courses during the summer if you need to complete prerequisite courses before fall semester.

What if my counselor does not believe I am capable of successfully completing a postsecondary training program?

You can ask your counselor if OOD will pay for a semester of school as a “diagnostic assessment.” A diagnostic assessment is a semester of school that OOD allows you to take to prove you are capable of completing the program with a minimum 2.0 GPA.

What if OOD will not support postsecondary training or will not pay for certain costs?

You have the right to file an appeal if you disagree with a decision made by your counselor. You must file your appeal within 30 days of learning of your counselor’s decision. For more information visit <https://ood.ohio.gov/laws-rules-and-policies/forms/appeal-process-overview>.

What if I want help with a college program designed to support students with intellectual disabilities?

This FAQ does not address “Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary” programs or “Transition and Postsecondary Education Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability.” OOD can support students in such programs, but it will depend on your specific situation and program. For more information about such programs, please contact Disability Rights Ohio.

Who can I call for help?

If you have questions about services, you should contact the Client Assistance Program at Disability Rights Ohio. Our phone number is 800-282-9181, and select option 2 for the intake department.

Where can I find more information?

You can find more information about postsecondary training at the following links:

- ❖ OOD’s website: <https://ood.ohio.gov/>
- ❖ OOD’s procedures governing VR services: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ood.ohio.gov/Policies/80-VR-00_VR_Procedure_Manual.pdf
- ❖ OOD’s regulations governing VR services: codes.ohio.gov/oac/3304-2
- ❖ The United States Department of Education’s Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities: <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/postsecondary-transition-guide-august-2020.pdf>