



We have the legal right of way.

POSTSECONDARY TRAINING: How to Get Help to Prepare for a Job

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,
- vocational schools or technical institutes,
- apprenticeship programs,
- short-term education programs,
- and more.

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 vocational rehabilitation counselor (VRC) agree on your job goal (or "employment outcome"), you will discuss with your VRC what services or training you need to reach that goal. If you and your VRC 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 VRC 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. You must tell your VRC 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 VRC 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 VRC does not believe I am capable of successfully completing a postsecondary training program?

You can ask your VRC 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 VRC. You must file your appeal within 30 days of learning of your VRC’s decision. For more information visit <http://ood.ohio.gov/Core-Services/BVR/Appeal-Rights>.

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: www.ood.ohio.gov.
- OOD’s policies and procedures governing VR services: <https://ood.ohio.gov/Information/OOD-Policies/80-Vocational-Rehabilitation-Policies>.
- OOD’s regulations governing VR services: <http://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://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/transition/products/postsecondary-transition-guide-may-2017.pdf>