

Referrals and applications

Synopsis of federal regulation

Rehabilitation Services (RS) will assure the prompt and equitable handling of referrals of individuals for vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. RS must make good faith efforts to inform these individuals of application requirements and to gather information necessary to initiate an assessment for determining eligibility and priority for services.

RS must assure that once an individual has submitted an application for VR services, an eligibility determination will be made within 60 days, unless—

- Exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of the agency preclude a determination within 60 days and the agency and the individual agree to a specific extension of time; or
- An extended evaluation is necessary.

An individual is considered to have submitted an application when the individual or the individual's representative, as appropriate:

- Has completed and signed an agency application form or has otherwise requested services; and
- Has provided information necessary to initiate an assessment to determine eligibility and priority for services; and
- Is available to complete the assessment process.

RS shall ensure that its application forms are widely available throughout the State.

Reference: §361.41

RS policy regarding referrals

RS will assure the prompt and equitable handling of referrals of individuals for (VR) services. The maximum time frame for responding to third party referrals by providing information about VR and application procedures will be 30 days.

Referral sources can help make appropriate referrals to VR by considering the following information:

- VR is an employment program, and individuals who participate are expected to become employed as a result of services received through an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Individuals must be available to pursue employment.

- Individuals who have disabilities or health conditions that hinder their employment should be referred for application and assessment to determine eligibility. Such individuals may be unemployed, underemployed or in need of services to maintain employment.
- To be eligible for VR services, an individual must:
 - Have a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment;
 - Be able to benefit, in terms of an employment outcome, from VR services; and
 - Require VR services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment.

VR counselors analyze a variety of information to determine eligibility. Such information may include existing medical and school records; work history; determinations made by other organizations that provide services for people with disabilities; Social Security records; information provided by the individual and family; and counselor observations. Counselors may also authorize additional diagnostics or assessment if needed to help determine eligibility. Counselors have 60 days from the time of application to determine eligibility. Referral sources can assist the eligibility process by assisting applicants in providing records, such as those listed above, if that is the applicant's informed choice.

The VR program serves individuals with all different types of disabling conditions. The primary disabilities of individuals served include, but are not restricted to the following:

- Mental Illness
 - Orthopedic
 - Mental Retardation
 - Learning Disabilities
 - Blindness or Visual Impairment
 - Deaf or Hard of Hearing
 - Traumatic Brain Injury
 - Cancer/Blood/Allergy Conditions
 - Alcohol/Drug Abuse
 - Amputation
 - Epilepsy
 - Deaf-blindness
- Individuals who have temporary health conditions, such as broken limbs or pregnancy, are not eligible for VR services on the basis of those conditions alone.

- Referrals should be made for individuals rather than entire families. However it is possible for the VR program to provide *individualized* services for more than one individual in a family. In addition, RS staff will collaborate with other sections of Kansas Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) to assure coordinated, integrated services for families.
- The functional limitations the individual experiences must be related to the disability in order to be eligible for services. Functional limitations caused by cultural issues, legal issues, lifestyle, primary languages other than English, lack of education or poor work history — in the absence of a disability — would not be sufficient to determine eligibility for VR services.
- If the VR program does not have sufficient resources to serve all eligible individuals who apply, an Order of Selection procedure and access list will be implemented which gives priority to serving individuals with the most significant disabilities. In the event of such a situation, counselors analyze the individuals' functional limitations, number of services needed, and length of services needed to assign them to the appropriate priority category level.
- VR is not a source for emergency medical or medical insurance coverage.

Referral sources are encouraged to contact the VR staff in their local communities directly to discuss specific referrals. Three quick questions to consider when discussing referrals are:

1. Is the disability a long-term or permanent condition that impacts the person's ability to get or keep a job?
2. Is the individual interested in pursuing employment?
3. Are the functional limitations the individual experiences related to the disability?

RS policy regarding applications

Requested services means that the basic information required by the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration for data reporting has been obtained. This information includes: name, Social Security number, date of birth, date of application, sex, race, marital status, Hispanic origin, referral source, highest grade completed, type of institution, work status, weekly earnings, hours worked, Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) status, primary source of support, medical insurance coverage, insurance available on the job, farmer status, veteran status, migratory worker status, work for profit, and year last employed.

The individual's address and phone number should be provided. This information may be provided through a variety of methods, including by phone or mail or in person. One of the easiest ways to assure that all federally required information elements are collected is to complete the RS application form.

What information is needed to initiate an assessment? Medical records or documentation pertinent to the disability or a release of information to obtain disability documentation; work history; educational background; and the applicant's description of the impediment to employment.

How is "available to complete an assessment" defined? The individual can attend planned or scheduled activities required to determine eligibility.

When all three conditions of submitting an application have been met, the 60-day timeframe for determining eligibility begins. To assure that the standard releases on the application form are in effect, a signed application should be included in the service record at the earliest opportunity. However, determination of eligibility may not be delayed pending receipt of a signed application form if the three conditions of application have been met.

Each local office is responsible for developing outreach plans to referral sources, minorities and members of unserved or underserved disability groups in their communities.

Documentation (record of service) requirements for the application process

In addition to the Rehabilitation Services application form, the following information, to the extent it will impact the VR process or employment, must be collected as part of the application process and recorded in the record of services.

- Applicant's description of the disability and how it impacts the ability to work and to complete daily activities.
- Employment history, such as work performed at home, and paid work (employers, dates, wages, duties, job title, reason no longer working there). Job duties the applicant can no longer perform. Type of work the applicant wants to do. Accommodations that may be required.
- Residential, domestic, and family information (such as number in family, dependents, typical routines, support available through family, friends and social groups).
- Medical history, such as names of hospitals, doctors, psychologists, social workers.
- Current medications.
- Transportation available? Driver's license? Ability to use public transportation, if available.

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- Corrections history, including names of probation or parole officers.
- Does the client have a Ticket-to-Work? Is it available for assignment? Or, if the client has assigned it to another Employment Network (EN), identify the EN.
- Media of choice.
- How can VR help? What is the applicant's reason for applying?