

## **Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)**

### **Synopsis of federal regulation**

Rehabilitation Services (RS) must assure that an IPE is developed and implemented in a timely manner for each individual determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation (VR) services or, if RS is operating under an Order of Selection, for each eligible individual who can be served. *(RS policy: The IPE shall be developed as soon as is reasonably possible, but no later than 120 days after determination of eligibility. This timeline may be extended with the agreement of the client.)*

Services will be provided in accordance with the provisions of the IPE.

RS must conduct an assessment for determining VR needs for each eligible individual or, if operating under an Order of Selection, for each eligible individual for whom RS is able to provide services. The purpose of this assessment is to determine the employment outcome, and the nature and scope of VR services to be included in the IPE.

The IPE must be designed to achieve a specific employment outcome that is selected by the individual consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

- Employment outcome means entering or retaining full-time, or if appropriate, part-time competitive employment in the integrated labor market, supported employment, or any other type of employment in an integrated setting, including self-employment, telecommuting or business ownership.
- Competitive employment means work in the competitive labor market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting, and for which an individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.

The eligible individual, or as appropriate, the individual's representative, may develop all or part of the IPE without assistance from RS or any other entity, or with assistance from a qualified VR counselor employed by RS, a qualified VR counselor not employed by RS, or other resources.

RS must provide the following information to each eligible individual (or representative) in the appropriate mode of communication:

- Information to assist the individual or representative in developing the IPE.
- Information describing the full range of components that must be included in the IPE.
- An explanation for determining the individual's financial commitments under the IPE.
- Information on assistance to complete the required forms.
- Additional information that the individual or representative requests.
- A description of the individual's rights and the appeal process.
- Information about the availability of the Client Assistance Program (CAP).

RS must assure that:

- The IPE is a written document.
- The IPE is developed and implemented in a manner that gives the eligible individual opportunity to exercise informed choice in selecting the employment outcome, the settings in which services will be provided, the entity or entities that will provide VR services and the methods for procuring services.
- The IPE is agreed to and signed by the eligible individual, or as appropriate, by the individual's representative.
- The IPE is approved and signed by a qualified VR counselor employed by RS.
- A copy of the IPE and a copy of any amendments to the IPE are provided to the eligible individual, or the individual's representative if appropriate. Copies are provided in the native language or mode of communication of the individual or representative.
- The IPE is reviewed at least annually by a qualified VR counselor and the eligible individual (or representative) to assess the individual's progress in achieving the identified employment outcome.
- The IPE is amended as necessary by the individual (or representative) in collaboration with a qualified VR counselor employed by RS if there are substantive changes in the employment outcome, the VR services to be provided, or the providers of the VR services.
- Amendments to the IPE do not take effect until agreed to and signed by the individual (or representative) and by the qualified VR counselor employed by RS.
- An IPE for a student with a disability receiving special education services is developed in consideration of the student's Individual Education Plan.

### **Data for preparing the IPE**

#### **1. Preparation without comprehensive assessment:**

- To the extent possible, the employment outcome and the nature and scope of rehabilitation services to be included in the individual's IPE must be determined based on the data used for assessment of eligibility and priority for services.

2. Preparation based on comprehensive assessment:
  - If additional data are necessary to determine the employment outcome and the nature and scope of services to be included in the IPE of an eligible individual, RS must conduct a comprehensive assessment of the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice, including the need for supported employment services, of an eligible individual, in the most integrated setting possible, consistent with the informed choice of the individual.
  - In preparing the comprehensive assessment, RS must use, to the maximum extent possible and appropriate, existing information that is current as of the date of the development of the IPE, including: information available from other programs and providers, particularly information used by education officials and the Social Security Administration; information provided by the individual and individual's family; and information obtained under the assessment for determining the individual's eligibility and VR needs.

### **Content of the IPE**

The IPE must include:

1. A description of the specific employment outcome that is chosen by the eligible individual that is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests, and informed choice.
2. A description of the specific rehabilitation services that are needed to achieve the employment outcome, including, as appropriate, the provision of assistive technology devices or services and personal assistance services, including training in the management of these services. Services must be provided in the most integrated setting that is appropriate for the services involved and is consistent with the informed choice of the individual.
3. Timelines for the achievement of the employment outcome and for initiation of services.
4. A description of the entity or entities chosen by the individual (or representative) that will provide the VR services, and the methods used to procure these services.
5. A description of the criteria that will be used to evaluate progress toward achievement of the employment outcome.
6. The terms and conditions of the IPE, including the rights and responsibilities of RS and the individual, the extent of the individual's financial participation in paying for the cost of services, the responsibility of the individual regarding applying for and securing comparable benefits, and the responsibility of other entities.

### **Supported employment requirements**

The IPE for individuals with the most significant disabilities for whom an employment outcome in a supported employment setting has been determined to be appropriate will also contain:

1. A description of the specific supported employment services to be provided by RS.
2. A description of the specific extended services needed, which may include natural supports.
3. Identification of the source of extended services, or, to the extent that it is not possible to identify the source of extended services at the time the IPE is developed, inclusion of a description of the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that those sources will become available.
4. A provision for periodic monitoring to assure that the individual is making satisfactory progress toward meeting the weekly work requirement established in the IPE by the time of transition to extended services.
5. A provision for the coordination of services provided under an IPE with services provided under other individualized plans established under other federal or state programs.
6. To the extent that job skills training is provided, a verification that the training will be provided on site.
7. A provision indicating that placement will be in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice of an individual with a most significant disability.

### **Post-employment services**

The IPE for each individual must contain, as determined to be necessary, statements concerning:

1. The expected need for post employment services prior to closing the record of services for an individual who has achieved an employment outcome.
2. A description of the terms and conditions for the provision of any post employment services.
3. If appropriate, a statement of how post-employment services will be provided through other entities through comparable benefits and services arrangements.

### **Coordination of services for students with disabilities who are receiving special education services**

The IPE for a student with a disability who is receiving special education services must be coordinated with the Individual Education Plan (IEP) for that individual in terms of the goals, objectives, and services identified in the IEP.

*References: § 361.5, 361.45 , 361.46*

## **RS policy**

**Development of the IPE:** Counselors will promote the individual's full involvement and participation in the development of the IPE. The counselor's role in providing information about and guiding the individual in exploration of options is critical to supporting informed choice of the individual. The employment outcome will be emphasized throughout the IPE development and the rehabilitation process.

**Timelines for prompt development of an IPE:** Client follow through is a determining factor in the time needed to develop an IPE. The IPE shall be developed as soon as is reasonably possible, but no later than 120 days after determination of eligibility. This timeline may be extended with the agreement of the client.

**Revisions to the IPE:** In keeping with federal regulatory guidance stated above, minor changes to an individual's program of services do not have to be recorded in a revision to the IPE. If the client and counselor agree to a substantive revision of the IPE by phone, the counselor may note this in the case record and proceed with providing services under the revised IPE. The client may sign the revised IPE during the next visit to the office or the revised IPE may be mailed to the client for signature.

**Vocational objectives:** The vocational objective should be stated with sufficient specificity to be meaningful to the client considering his or her level of vocational development and the employment opportunities available to the person in the local labor market or labor market to which the person is willing to relocate. Initial goals, particularly for transition students, may be stated in terms of a particular type of career or industry, such as clerical work, and subsequently revised as the person focuses on specific employment goals. If more than one choice is appropriate, list a vocational objective that is as close as possible. In the narrative list the other vocational objectives being considered. As the case develops, if a different vocational objective is more appropriate, the IPE may be amended. General vocational objectives such as "to be determined" or "competitive employment" may not be used. If an individual is interested in a vocational objective which requires a license, background check or drug screening test, the ability of the client to meet those requirements must be addressed periodically at appropriate stages of the rehabilitation process, including when the vocational objective is being selected, before development of the IPE is completed (Status 12) and when the client is ready for job placement.