**OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**

**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA**

**TOM WOLF, GOVERNOR**

**DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY**

**W. GERARD OLEKSIAK, SECRETARY**

**www.dli.pa.gov/ovr**

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**WHAT IS OVR?**

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) serves people who have disabilities that present a substantial impediment to employment.

Services are planned on the basis of the individual’s need to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in or regain employment. OVR has 21 District Offices located around the state. Our counselors work every year with thousands of persons who have physical, mental or emotional disabilities.

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**SHOULD I APPLY TO OVR?**

You should apply if:

1. you have a disability;
2. your disability causes you substantial problems in preparing for, securing, retaining, advancing in or regaining employment;
3. you want to work.

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**HOW DO I GET STARTED?**

For more information about services, call or write the OVR District Office listed on the back of this brochure that is nearest to where you live.

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**WILL I BE ELIGIBLE?**

When you apply to OVR for help with employment, a counselor will be assigned to work with you. The counselor will meet with you face to face to get to know you in order to decide how OVR can best assist you in helping yourself. With your written consent, your counselor will gather information about your needs, interests, aptitudes, education, work experience and finances. Your counselor will arrange any needed medical examinations and testing, at no cost to you. You will be eligible for OVR services if:

1. you have a disability that is a physical, mental or emotional impairment which results in a substantial impediment to employment, and you can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from services provided; and
2. vocational rehabilitation services are required for you to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in or regain employment.

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**WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO ME?**

Some services can help overcome or lessen your disability; others can directly help you prepare for a career. The services you receive will be arranged to meet your individual needs. Not everyone will need every service.

**Vocational Counseling Services** are offered to assist you in finding ways to better help yourself throughout the rehabilitation technology that may be provided to help you maintain your career. Vocational counseling services help you to better understand your potential goals, set realistic vocational goals, change them when necessary, develop successful work habits and begin a satisfying career.

**Diagnostic Services** include medical, psychological, and audiological exams and tests used to better understand your disability and your needs for specific types of services.

**Vocational Evaluation** includes testing such as aptitude, interest, general ability, academic exams, work tolerance and “hands-on” job experience used to understand your vocational potential.

**Restoration Services** include many types of medical services and equipment, such as physical and occupational therapy, wheelchairs, automobile hand controls and other types of rehabilitation technology that may be provided to enable you to pursue your career and achieve independence.

**Training Services** include education to prepare you for a job, including, but not limited to, basic academic, vocational/ technical college, on the job, independent living skills, and personal and work adjustment training. It may be necessary for you to leave home to get the training you want and need.

**Placement Services** include vocational counseling, job-seeking programs, job clubs and job development used where appropriate.

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**HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO DETERMINE IF I AM ELIGIBLE?**

Your eligibility for OVR services will be determined within 60 days of the date you apply for OVR services, unless:

- exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond our control preclude us from completing the determination and you agree an extension is warranted; or
- trial work experiences are required to determine your eligibility.

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**WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I BECOME ELIGIBLE FOR OVR?**

You and your counselor will work together to make informed choices and develop a career plan for you. The plan will be based on your career goal, the services needed to get you started or maintaining your career, and your responsibilities. This plan of action is called the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

During the initial stage of the IPE, you and your counselor plan for employment. During this time, you will receive information and options to assist you in developing a successful program. You will have the opportunity to consider different types of careers, your job skills, chances for employment in your local area, potential earnings, family responsibilities, training and other matters of importance to you and your family.

Your counselor wants you to pick a career, one that you will still want to pursue, in which you will still be able to work years from now. Your IPE outlines the steps you will take to obtain a job and can be changed if your needs change. You and your counselor will work together to make any necessary changes.
WHAT ARE IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER IF you are receiving vocational counseling or job placement assistance. If you are unhappy, you are entitled to a thorough evaluation to find out if you are eligible for rehabilitation.

HOW MUCH WILL THIS COST ME?

You will be treated in a manner consistent with the principles of:

• individual dignity, personal responsibility, self-determination and pursuit of a meaningful career based on informed choices that you make;
• respect for your privacy, rights and equal access as an individual;
• inclusion, integration and full participation as an individual;
• support for the involvement of a parent, family member, guardian, lawyer or authorized representative if you request, desire or need such assistance; and
• support for individual advocacy and community involvement.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?

What is this rehabilitation program. Don't hesitate to ask questions about anything. You are entitled to the best service OVR can give you. Your comments, suggestions and criticisms are important. If you are an applicant or a customer of OVR and are dissatisfied with a determination or service OVR is providing, please contact your counselor or OVR's supervisor to discuss your concerns. You may request a hearing before an impartial Hearing Officer. A written request for a hearing must be made within 30 days. This request must be mailed to or filed with the Director, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BPRS), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, 1521 North Sixth Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102. An impartial hearing officer will be assigned to hear and decide your case. You will be given the opportunity for an informal administrative review prior to the impartial hearing. At any time during your program you may contact the Client Assistance Program for help.

WHAT IS THE CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM?

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) works with you and your counselor to:

• act as an advocate for your rights;
• answer your questions about rehabilitation;
• explain rules, regulations and procedures;
• assist you through the appeal process; and
• help you to establish and maintain open communication.

Any applicant for OVR services who wants general information or who would like CAP's involvement during their rehabilitation program can contact CAP for assistance. If your case is about to be, or already has been, closed by OVR, you may call CAP to review the case to ensure that you have received maximum benefits from OVR. Contact CAP at: 215-557-7112 (Voice/TTY). To learn more about CAP, please visit: www.equalemployment.org.

WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?

You are in charge of your rehabilitation program and must be willing to help yourself. You must participate actively in setting your vocational goals and work hard to achieve them. It is very important that you talk to your counselor about your needs, your deadlines and anything else that could speed up, slow down or stop you from starting and maintaining a career. Rehabilitation will work better if you:

• keep all appointments or call if you can't be there;
• ask questions if you do not understand something.

It does not cost you anything to apply for services. There is no charge for diagnostic services, vocational evaluation, vocational counseling or job placement assistance. If you are eligible for services, your counselor may ask you to provide documents about your income and expenses. Depending upon your income, you may have to contribute to the cost of OVR services. OVR cannot pay for any services you receive before you applied to OVR. Even after you apply, OVR can only pay for those services approved in advance by your counselor.

WHAT DO I PAY FOR?

An appeal will give you the opportunity to discuss your dissatisfaction in person.

• You may bring someone with you to help you at the appeal.

A perfect ending is when you have started your career. You may choose to end your involvement with OVR at any time, but you should let your counselor know if you make such a decision. Or, if you do not follow through with the steps you helped to plan, are uncooperative, cannot be located or if OVR cannot help you reach your vocational goal, your counselor may find it necessary to close your case.

Yes. You may reaply at any time. Even though you are working and your case is closed, it is possible that help can be provided if you begin to have problems with your employment or with your disability. If this happens, please contact your local OVR office.

• You are entitled to a thorough evaluation to find out if you are eligible for rehabilitation;
• All personal information that is given to your counselor or obtained about you will be used only for your rehabilitation.
• You have a right to ask to change counselors.
• You have a right to continuing service if you should move to an area serviced by a different district office within Pennsylvania. Discussing your move with your counselor will facilitate this.

HOW WILL I BE TREATED?

You will be treated in a manner consistent with the principles of:

• doing an appeal or if you receive your unemployment compensation by telephone (Voice/TTY). To learn more about CAP, please visit: www.equalemployment.org.

How to increase your ability to obtain a job. You will receive ideas, practice and advice on finding job leads, filling out applications, getting interviews for a job and how to interview. Your counselor may also give you job leads or explain to employers about tax credits they can receive when hiring you. The purpose of helping you is to make the better your chances are of starting your career.

• Support services are provided if they are necessary for you to start your career. Services may include:
• room, board and transportation costs during your evaluation or while you are completing a rehabilitation program;
• educational tools, licenses or equipment;
• home modifications, adaptive or special household equipment related to obtaining or maintaining a job;
• van or car modifications, including special driving devices or lifting devices to travel to your job;
• personal care assistance provided to help you with your daily needs in order to enable you to participate in a vocational rehabilitation program;
• job site modifications that will enable you to obtain and maintain a job;
• independent living training to prepare you for becoming more self-sufficient and thereby make it possible for you to participate fully in the vocational rehabilitation program;
• Text Telephone (TTY), signaling devices, hearing aids and interpreter services may be provided to help you communicate if needed to participate in the vocational rehabilitation program.

CAN I START OVER AGAIN?

OVR shall not discriminate against a customer or applicant by reason of race, color, religious creed, ancestry, union membership, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, AIDS or HIV status, or disability.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?

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WHAT IS OVR'S NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

OVR shall not discriminate against a customer or applicant by reason of race, color, religious creed, ancestry, union membership, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, AIDS or HIV status, or disability. Any applicant for OVR services who wants general information or who would like CAP's involvement during their rehabilitation program can contact CAP for assistance. If your case is about to be, or already has been, closed by OVR, you may call CAP to review the case to ensure that you have received maximum benefits from OVR. Contact CAP at: 215-557-7112 (Voice/TTY). To learn more about CAP, please visit: www.equalemployment.org.

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• keep all appointments or call if you can't be there;
• ask questions if you do not understand something.

• are honest about your needs and feelings.
• help yourself.

WHAT ARE MY COUNSELOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES?

Your counselor understands how disabilities can get in the way of a career. It is your counselor's responsibility to help you understand your strengths and the steps needed to overcome your substantial impediment to employment. Your counselor will: help you decide on a career that builds on your strengths, give you information, provide guidance and support; and arrange for you to receive the services you need to prepare for, start and maintain a career. We hope that the information in this brochure will help you understand OVR and that it marks the beginning of a successful partnership. If you have any further questions, please ask your counselor.

PLEASE NOTE:

When OVR does not have enough money to provide services to all eligible individuals, it is required to provide services according to an Order of Selection. Under an Order of Selection, a certain group (or groups) of individuals receive services while others are placed on an indefinite waiting list for rehabilitation services. OVR's Order of Selection places all eligible individuals into one of three groups as follows:

• individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities;
• individuals with Significant Disabilities; and
• all remaining eligible individuals.

Should you be eligible for OVR services, your counselor will inform you if OVR is under an Order of Selection and whether you will be provided services or placed on a waiting list.

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Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
1521 North Sixth Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102
Telephone 717-787-5244 (Voice) 717-787-4885 (TTY)
800-442-6351* (Voice) 866-830-7327* (TTY)
800-883-5244 (Voice) 800-622-2842* (Voice)
*Toll free within Pennsylvania