### Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

**Commonwealth of Pennsylvania**

**Tom Wolf, Governor**

**W. Gerard Oleksiak, Secretary**

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

### What is OVR?

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

### 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; and
3. you want to work.

### 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.

### Will I Be Eligible?

Your application for OVR help with employment will be reviewed by an OVR counselor. Qualified counselors are available at each of our District Offices located around the state. Our counselors work every year with thousands of persons who have disabilities that present a substantial impediment to employment.

### What Services Are Available to Me?

Some services can help you 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.

#### Rehabilitation Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Counseling Services</td>
<td>Offered to assist you in finding ways to better help yourself through the rehabilitation technology that may be provided to you to start and maintain a career. Vocational counseling services help you to better understand your potential, rely on your abilities, set realistic vocational goals, change them when necessary, develop successful work habits and begin a satisfying career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic Services</td>
<td>Include medical, psychological, and audiological exams and tests used to better understand your disability and your needs for specific types of services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Evaluation</td>
<td>Include testing such as aptitude, interest, general ability, academic exams, work tolerance and &quot;hands-on&quot; job experience used to understand your vocational potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restoration Services</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Services</td>
<td>Include education to prepare you for a job, including, but not limited to, basic academic, vocational/technical college, on-the-job independent living skills, personal and work adjustment training. It may be necessary for you to leave home to get the training you need and want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement Services</td>
<td>Include vocational counseling, job-seeking programs, job clubs and job development programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How Long Will It Take to Determine If I Am Eligible?

Your approval for OVR services within 60 days of the date you apply for OVR services, unless:
- exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond your control preclude us from completing the determination and you agree an extension is warranted; or
- trial work experiences are required to determine your eligibility.

### What Happens After I Become Eligible for OVR?

You and your counselor will work together to make informed choices about your career goal, the services needed to assist you in getting started or maintaining your career, and your responsibilities. This plan of action is called the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Developing your goal usually takes time. 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, and 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 apply only for those services approved in advance by your OVR. Even after you apply, 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 your counselor’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 of the date of the request must be mailed to or filed with the Director, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BTRS), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, 1521 North Sixth Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102. An impartial hearing officer will be assigned to hear 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 IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR COMPLAINTS? 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. If this happens, please contact your local OVR office.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS? 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. If this happens, please contact your local OVR office.

WHAT IS THE CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM? OVR shall not discriminate against a customer or applicant by race, color, religious creed, ancestry, union membership, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, AIDS or HIV status, or disability. If this happens, please contact your local OVR office.

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WHAT ARE MY COUNSELOR’S RESPONSIBILITIES? OVR shall not discriminate against a customer or applicant by race, color, religious creed, ancestry, union membership, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, AIDS or HIV status, or disability. If this happens, please contact your local OVR office.

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 own rehabilitation 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.

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

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST ME? 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 received before you applied to OVR. Even after you apply, OVR can pay only for those services approved in advance by your counselor.

WHAT ARE IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER IF I AM DISSATISFIED? • Try to solve the problem with your counselor first. • You may file a written appeal if you cannot resolve your dissatisfaction by addressing it with your counselor. • Your counselor will help you with an appeal if you ask for help. • You will not be penalized for making an appeal. That depends on your abilities, the career for which you are preparing and your individual needs. Most important, it depends on how much responsibility you take for helping yourself to prepare for, start or maintain a career. You can help things move along as quickly as possible if you: • help your counselor gather needed information. • keep all appointments or call if you can’t be there. • stay in touch with your counselor (if your counselor cannot find you, arrangements for services cannot be made). • tell your counselor if you feel things are going too slowly.

HOW WILL I BE TREATED? 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 expression, national origin, AIDS or HIV status, or disability. You are in charge of your rehabilitation program and must be willing to help yourself. You must participate actively in setting your own rehabilitation 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:

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WHAT ARE MY COUNSELOR’S RESPONSIBILITIES? Your counselor understands how disabilities can get in the way of your 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, gives 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 services. If funds become available, 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.

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 or customer of OVR who believes he or she is being discriminated against may contact OVR at the following address:

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
1521 North Sixth Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102

The Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Programs receive 29.7 percent of their funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For Federal fiscal year 2018, the total amount of grant funds awarded was $126,920,624. The remaining 70.3 percent, including additional matching fund costs ($34,350,816.91), was funded by State appropriations and other non-Federal allowable sources.

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 wants to file a complaint may contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP) by phone, mail, or in person.

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