

Spirit Lake Vocational Rehabilitation Project

Consumer/Applicant Handbook



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VR what is it?

VR is a program to help people get jobs.

Vocational Rehabilitation- what does it mean?

If you look it up you will find that it means:

Vocation- A regular job, especially one for which a person is particularly suited or qualified.

Rehabilitation

1. To restore to good health or useful life, a through therapy and education.
2. To reinstate the good name of.

So, the purpose of VR is to provide therapy, education or whatever else is needed to help you find a job for which best suits you.

This book explains much of what you need to know if you want to use Spirit Lake VR services.

Keep this book and read it (please!) It will answer many of the questions about VR on the Spirit Lake Nation Reservation. You have the right to be active in planning services to meet your needs. You can use this book to help you understand the program.

Your Outreach Worker

Your outreach worker is there to help you. She will answer any questions you may have. The two of you will be working very closely together. An outreach worker has training in the area of disabilities and how they relate to employment. It is her job to help you understand your strengths and weaknesses, how your problems relate to work and the steps you can take to obtain a job.

You and your outreach worker must understand and trust one another. Respect the training and experience she has, but don't be afraid to disagree with her or to ask questions. Your input and involvement is absolutely necessary. Your outreach worker wants to help you to set up a program that meets your needs and helps you find a job suited to you.

The VR Process

The rehabilitation process is a series of steps aimed at helping you get and keep a job that fits your abilities. It is important to understand that each person has strengths and weaknesses. The Spirit Lake VR Project want to help you learn to live with and overcome your disability while improving your abilities. For some people, this may take a short period of time. For others, it may take a much longer time, even years. Remember that your needs, your goals, your disabilities and your VR program, including services, are different from anyone else.

There are many people who will help you during your rehabilitation process. One important person is your outreach worker, Your and your outreach worker will work together to fit your abilities, interests, job requirements and job opportunities into a personal plan of services. Please remember that YOU are an important part of the VR process, and your ideas and opinions are needed.

The steps you will go through in the VR process are described on the next few pages.

Step 1: You Apply

Anyone living on or near the Spirit Lake Sioux Reservation who is an enrolled tribe member can apply.

You do not have to be a member of the Spirit Lake Sioux, but you do have to be an enrolled member in some tribe.

To be eligible for services you must have:

A disability, such as a physical impairment, learning disability or other disorder, which keeps you from getting or keeping a job which suits your abilities.

Outreach workers will be happy to meet with you to talk about how to become eligible and the VR process in general.

The VR Office drop-in hours are:
Monday through Friday
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Stop by anytime to talk with an outreach worker!

If you cannot come to the office during our regular hours, please call us and we will be happy to make an appointment to meet with you in the evening or on Saturday.

Our Number is 766-4446.

Or, we may be able to answer your questions over the phone. Just give us a call.

The outreach worker will try to find out as much as possible about you: your personal history, education, medical needs, job skills and goals. This will help her better understand what your disability might be and what services you might need. If you wish to apply for services, the outreach worker will help you. Your application will be taken seriously and you will be treated with respect.

The outreach worker will explain:

Confidentiality: Information about you will be obtained only with your consent, and the only people to see your records will be those who need to know the information for your service plan.

Appeals: You have the right to appeal if you disagree with any decision made in your case.

Step Two: Finding Out About You



Let's Look at You

Is VR for you?

The next step is to take a good look at you and your needs. This is a comprehensive assessment done to determine eligibility.

What is a comprehensive assessment?

It is one or more exams to make sure that VR services are right for you. To be a client, we must be able to show three things.

1. You must have a disability, such as a physical handicap, learning disability or substance abuse disorder.
2. This disability has made it difficult for you to get or keep a job.
3. There is a good chance that VR will be able to help you get employment.

If you have not had an exam in the past few months, you will be asked to make a doctor's appointment.

Any exam we ask you to take will be at no charge.

You may need more than one type of exam. You may be asked to take tests from a psychologist or other specialist or to take an alcohol evaluation.

Your outreach worker will also want you to take an interest surveyor work evaluation to determine your skills, abilities and interests. This can help show types of jobs you would be good at and enjoy. It will also help to determine your chances for success in an education or training program. This evaluation may include counseling, paper and pencil tests, job shadowing and on-the-job evaluation.

Sometimes, all of the above testing may not be enough to determine eligibility. Your outreach worker may decide that more in-depth evaluation is necessary. This is called an extended evaluation. This can last up to 18 months, to give you the best chance to determine if Spirit Lake VR services can help you. Not everyone goes through this evaluation, and it does not always take the full 18 months. Your outreach worker wants to determine your eligibility as much as you do. Ask her any questions you may have at any time during this process. After

all the evaluation services are completed, and your outreach worker has a full understanding of your case, a decision will be made as soon as possible.

if you are not found eligible, you have the right to appeal the decision to your outreach worker. The appeal procedure will be explained by the outreach worker when she informs you of the decision. You may also contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP) if you wish assistance on this or any other decision made by your outreach worker.

The address is:

North Dakota Client Assistance Program
600 S. 2nd Street, Suite 1B
Bismarck, ND 58504
800-207-6122

Step Three: Writing Your Plan

The next step is for you and your outreach worker to plan a program of rehabilitation. This is called the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). The exciting thing about the IPE is that it is developed just for your unique situation, by you and your outreach worker. It is important that both of you work together to develop the plan. Your outreach worker's experience in VR and knowledge of the resources available to you are very important. Even more important are the ideas and ambitions you bring. You really are the key to making the plan succeed. It is about YOUR goals. YOUR plans and YOUR skills that are needed for YOUR job.

The major focus of the IPE is the action plan.

The action will say:

What vocational goal you and your outreach worker are working towards.

How this goal will be reached.

What you and your outreach worker are responsible for as part of reaching this goal.

Expenses (if any) you are expected to pay as part of the plan.

How and by who this plan will be explained to you so that you know what you are responsible for doing and what your outreach worker is responsible for doing.

You should understand it completely, so be sure to ask questions if any part is unclear to you. When you and your outreach worker have signed the IPE, you will be given a copy of it. Keep your copy of the IPE and refer to it to be sure that you are aware of what the VR project is doing to help you.

What if things change?

Maybe you have a different career goal.

Maybe you get some training and find you have a real talent for computers.

Maybe you find that you love working with children and decide that would be the perfect job for you.

Even though you and your worker have agreed on a plan, that doesn't mean it cannot change if your circumstances change.

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At least once a year, your IPE will be reviewed by you and your outreach worker to see if it is still the best program for you. If your needs have changed, your program can also change.

Step Four: Services Provided

When you apply, you will fill out information listing your income. This is needed to explore the extent of your financial needs, because not all services are provided free. For some services, you may need to apply to other programs for financial help, or you may be required to contribute. This will be based on your own resources, such as Social Security, Workers' Compensation, TANF, Pell or other educational grants, etc. \

These services are always provided without charge to VR clients:

Diagnostic tests
Guidance
Counseling
Job placement

There are 14 other types of services which are available to VR clients and will be part of the IPE when necessary. Most people will receive some of these services. It is not likely anyone would receive all of them.

Services Available

1. Maintenance
2. Transportation
3. Services to family members
4. Interpretive services for the deaf
5. Reader services
6. Telecommunications, sensory and other technological aids
7. Rehabilitation Engineering Services (Assistive Technology)
8. Attendant services
9. Occupational licenses, tolls and equipment
10. Recruiting and training services
11. Training
12. Placement services
13. Physical and mental restoration
14. Other goods and services

If you have any questions about any services available, please ask your outreach worker.

Step Five: Finding that Job!

Once the services necessary to help you build your job skills are completed, you should be able to begin working. Already, you and your worker will have made plans to conduct a job search. This is called placement.

Some clients will need very little help finding a job. You may have conducted successful job searches before on your own. Still, your outreach worker may have current information on job openings or can suggest other resources where you can find this information.

Many clients will be full of questions. The type of job you get is often a big factor in how you feel about your life in general. You may be very nervous, and feel as if you have no idea where to start. What do I say in a letter to an employer? How do I act in an interview?

Your outreach worker and others experienced in placement can help you:

- In filling out applications.

- Writing cover letters.

- Writing your resume.

- Calling employers for information on jobs and for appointments.

- On how to conduct a successful job interview.

Matching your abilities to the right job can take a lot of time and effort on your part. Your outreach worker can help, but she can't and shouldn't, do it all. As will all of your rehabilitation program, the more responsibility you take in looking for a job, the better your chances of success.

Step Six: You Find and Keep the Right Job for You.

One you begin working, your outreach worker may check with you and your new employer to see if you are both satisfied. You may want to ask your worker about services to help you in your first few weeks on the job. These could include help with learning new tasks or helping you find services you need to keep your job, such as child care or a ride to work. If you need help, ASK YOUR OUTREACH WORKER.

After 60 days, you and your outreach worker will discuss closing your case. You will be determined successfully rehabilitated once you have achieved a successful employment outcome.

This is defined as:

“Entering or retaining full-time, or, if appropriate, part-time competitive employment in the integrated labor market, the practice of a profession, self-employment, homemaking, farm or family work (including work for which payment is in kind rather than cash), extended employment in a community rehabilitation program, supported employment or other gainful work.”

if you and your outreach worker agree that your case should be closed because no more services are needed, you will be informed in writing that your case is closed.

Questions you may have

What is all that about “successful rehabilitation” supposed to mean?

It means that you will leave the program once you have a job which is right for you- and that can mean a full-time job, part-time work, working on the family farm or business, or taking care of your children.

Why didn't you just say so in the first place?

We are a federally-funded program, that means we never say anything in plain English.

Am I out of the program as soon as I find a job?

No. You and your outreach worker will discuss closing a case after you have been employed for 60 days.

Once I am out of the program, can I come back for services?

You can reapply to the project for services if your situation changes or you are not able to keep your job because of your former disability or a new one.

Five Responsibilities of VR Clients

1. Communication

It is your responsibility to inform the office if you can't keep an appointment or need to reschedule it for another time. Even if there are no problems, you should keep in touch with your outreach worker regularly so she can be aware of your progress, and she can have the chance to let you know about services or jobs which may be of interest to you.

Any change of address, telephone number, medical condition or new employment should be reported to your outreach worker as soon as possible. Even if you aren't sure you will be able to keep your job, let your outreach worker know, because she may be able to help you hold the job.

It is your responsibility to keep appointments and be on time. Your outreach worker can best help you meet your employment goals if she meets with you regularly and has a chance to know your situation.

2. Program Planning

It is your responsibility to participate in the planning of your IPE. Your thoughts are needed. The only way to make the best possible program for you is to let your outreach worker know what you want to do. You should listen closely to your outreach worker, ask questions to make sure you understand and explain your goals as clearly as possible. If you think changes should be made in your plan, discuss these changes and your reasons for them with your outreach worker.

3. Follow Through on Recommendations

If recommendations are made about your program, it is up to you to follow through. This includes medical recommendations, such as regular medication, special diets or exercise, etc. Your chances of success are related to the efforts you make. Keep in mind that what you might think are only recommendations on your IPE are probable conditions you need to meet to continue receiving program services. Make sure you understand this.

4. Financial Participation

It is your responsibility to help pay for your rehabilitation to the best of your ability, and to make every effort to locate "similar benefits." Similar benefits are other sources of funding that might pay for your rehabilitation. These can include such things as Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security

Income (SSI) public assistance, Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance, educational grants, scholarships and loans.

Your outreach worker will discuss each of these with you and give you any help you need to apply for these other benefits.

5. Satisfactory Performance

Whether in vocational training or on-the-job-training, it is your responsibility to do the best that you can. If you are in academic training, your outreach worker will need to see your grade at the end of each semester. You must maintain the grade average and carry the normal course work required by all college students, agreed upon with your outreach worker, to continue receiving further training. Regular attendance and punctuality are very important.

Your Rights

The Spirit Lake Vocational Rehabilitation Project recognizes that you have certain rights and those rights will be respected. As a client or applicant of the Spirit Lake VR Project, you should understand your rights.

1. Confidentiality

All information given to the Spirit Lake VR Project by you or someone who has examined you will be used only for your rehabilitation. No personal information will be given to anyone unless you have given written permission by a signed consent form. The only exception to this is that then information can be within the rehabilitation program when case files are reviewed by Spirit Lake VR evaluators to insure that you are being given the best possible quality of services.

2. Your Case File

You have the right to see most of the information that is in your case file if you sign a release of information form. There may be some information that the outreach worker will not release to you directly. This would be reports which the outreach worker received from someone else. In that case, you would be asked to contact that person directly. An example of this is some medical or psychological reports.

3. Appeals

Most people who go through the VR process have no difficulties with the agency. However, if you do have a problem, you should first discuss it with your outreach worker. If you do not agree with your outreach worker's decision after you have discussed the matter, you have the right to an appeal. The appeal is a formal process where a person who is not satisfied with any action by the Spirit Lake VR staff or program regarding improper or denied services can seek a review of the action.

In most cases, a disagreement between a client and their outreach worker can be resolved through an Administrative Review. In an Administrative Review, the Director obtains information from both the client and outreach worker and makes a decision as to the validity of the outreach worker's actions.

A request for Administrative Review can be made by writing to:

*Martina Kazena, Director
Spirit Lake Vocational Rehabilitation
P.O. Box 519
Fort Totten, ND 58335*

If you are not satisfied with any action of the Spirit Lake VR Project at any time, you can contact the Client Assistant Program at any time to assist you.