

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment VetSuccess Program

Written by VBI

Monday, 30 August 2010 08:48 -

The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) VetSuccess Program is authorized by Congress under Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 31. It is sometimes referred to as the Chapter 31 program. The VetSuccess program assists Veterans with service-connected disabilities to prepare for, find, and keep suitable jobs. For Veterans with service-connected disabilities so severe that they cannot immediately consider work, VetSuccess offers services to improve their ability to live as independently as possible.

Services that may be provided by the VR&E VetSuccess Program include:

- Comprehensive rehabilitation evaluation to determine abilities, skills, and interests for employment
- Vocational counseling and rehabilitation planning for employment services
- Employment services such as job-training, job-seeking skills, resume development, and other work readiness assistance
- Assistance finding and keeping a job, including the use of special employer incentives and job accommodations
- On the Job Training (OJT), apprenticeships, and non-paid work experiences
- Post-secondary training at a college, vocational, technical or business school
- Supportive rehabilitation services including case management, counseling, and medical referrals
- Independent living services for Veterans unable to work due to the severity of their disabilities

Who is Eligible for VR&E VetSuccess Services?

Active Duty Service Members are eligible if they:

- Expect to receive an honorable discharge upon separation from active duty
- Obtain a memorandum rating of 20% or more from the VA
- Apply for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) VetSuccess services

Veterans are eligible if they:

- Have received, or will receive, a discharge that is other than dishonorable
- Have a service-connected disability rating of at least 10%, or a memorandum rating of 20% or more from the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA)
- Apply for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) VetSuccess services

Basic period of Eligibility

The basic period of eligibility in which VR&E VetSuccess services may be used is 12 years from the latter of the following:

- Date of separation from active military service, or
- Date the veteran was first notified by VA of a service-connected disability rating.

The basic period of eligibility may be extended if a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) determines that a Veteran has a Serious Employment Handicap

What Happens after Eligibility is Established?

The Veteran is scheduled to meet with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) for a comprehensive evaluation to determine if he / she is entitled for services. A comprehensive evaluation includes:

- An assessment of the Veteran's interests, aptitudes, and abilities

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- An assessment of whether service connected disabilities impair the Veteran's ability to find and / or hold a job using the occupational skills he or she has already developed
- Vocational exploration and goal development leading to employment and / or maximum independence at home and in the Veteran's community

What is an Entitlement Determination?

A Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) works with the Veteran to complete a determination if an employment handicap exists. An employment handicap exists if the Veteran's service connected disability impairs his / her ability to obtain and maintain a job. Entitlement to services is established if the veteran has an employment handicap and is within his or her 12-year basic period of eligibility and has a 20 % or greater service-connected disability rating.

If the service connected disability rating is less than 20%, or if the Veteran is beyond the 12-year basic period of eligibility, then a serious employment handicap must be found to establish entitlement to VR&E VetSuccess services. A serious employment handicap is based on the extent of services required to help a Veteran to overcome his or her service and non-service connected disabilities permitting the return to suitable employment.

What Happens after the Entitlement Determination is Made?

The Veteran and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) work together to:

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- Determine transferable skills, aptitudes, and interests
 - Identify viable employment and / or independent living services options
 - Explore labor market and wage information
 - Identify physical demands and other job characteristics
 - Narrow vocational options to identify a suitable employment goal
 - Select a VR&E VetSuccess program track leading to an employment or independent living goal
- Investigate training requirements
 - Identify resources needed to achieve rehabilitation
 - Develop an individualized rehabilitation plan to achieve the identified employment and / or independent living goals

What is a Rehabilitation Plan?

A rehabilitation plan is an individualized, written outline of the services, resources and criteria that will be used to achieve employment and / or independent living goals. The plan is an agreement that is signed by the Veteran and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) and is updated as needed to assist the Veteran to achieve his / her goals.

Depending on their circumstances, veterans will work with their VRC to select one of the following five tracks of services :

- Reemployment (with a former employer)
- Direct job placement services for new employment
- Self-employment
- Employment through long term services including OJT, college, and other training
- Independent living services

What Happens after the Rehabilitation Plan is Developed?

After a plan is developed and signed, a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) or case manager will continue to work with the Veteran to implement the plan to achieve suitable employment and / or independent living. The VRC or case manager will provide ongoing counseling, assistance, and coordinate of services such as tutorial assistance, training in job-seeking skills, medical and dental referrals, adjustment counseling, payment of training allowance, if applicable, and other services as required to help the Veteran achieve rehabilitation.

Summary of the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment VetSuccess Program (Chapter 31) Process

A VA Veteran who is eligible for an evaluation under Chapter 31 must first apply for services and receive an appointment with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC). The VRC will work with the Veteran to determine if an employment handicap exists as a result of his or her service connected disability. If an employment handicap is established and the Veteran is found entitled to services. The VRC and the Veteran will continue counseling to select a track of services and jointly develop a plan to address the Veteran's rehabilitation and employment needs.

The rehabilitation plan will specify an employment or independent living goal, identify intermediate goals, and outline services and resources that VA will provide to assist the Veteran to achieve his / her goals. The VRC and the Veteran will work together to implement the plan to assist the Veteran to achieve his or her employment and / or independent living goals.

A Veteran found not to be entitled to services, the VRC will help him or her locate other resources to address any rehabilitation and employment needs identified during the evaluation. Referral to other resources may include state vocational rehabilitation programs; Department of Labor employment programs for disabled veterans; state, federal or local agencies providing services for employment or small business development; internet-based resources for rehabilitation and employment; and information about applying for financial aid.