

**RSM 2  
VR & IL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL  
SECTION 1300**

## **TRANSITIONING**

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1301 Services, Coordination and Planning for Students with Disabilities .....	1
1301.01 Provision of Services .....	1
1301.02 DORS Role .....	1
1301.03 Target Population .....	2
1301.04 Outreach Responsibilities .....	2
1301.05 Student Referrals and Intake for VR Employment Services .....	3
1301.06 Joint Sharing and Use of Evaluations and Assessments .....	3
1301.07 Eligibility Determination and Order of Selection Category Assignment .....	3
1301.08 Development of the IPE for Students with Disabilities.....	4
1301.09 In-School Rehabilitation Services .....	5
1301.10 Assistive Technology (AT).....	5
1301.11 Financial Responsibilities .....	5
1302 Services for Transitioning Individuals not in Secondary School at Application.....	5
1303 AWARE™ for Transitioning Students.....	6

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### **1301 Services, Coordination and Planning for Students with Disabilities**

#### **1301.01 Provision of Services**

The provision of vocational rehabilitation (VR) employment services to students with disabilities shall be:

- a. Governed by DORS policies and procedures.
- b. In accordance with:
  1. State and federal law and regulation.
  2. The statewide educational cooperative agreement developed among the Maryland State Department of Education’s Divisions of Rehabilitation Services, Special Education/Early Intervention Services, Career Technology and Adult Learning, and Student and School Services.
  3. Transitioning Students with Disabilities, Education Article 21-305 in the development of Local Cooperative Agreements.

#### **1301.02 DORS Role**

The primary role of DORS is to provide career guidance and counseling, career assessments, and rehabilitation services related to career-connected activities to eligible students with disabilities who can be served within the Order of Selection during their last two years of high school. DORS managers and counselors shall collaborate with appropriate school personnel, family members and students in support of preparation for post-secondary services and employment. School officials continue to be responsible for providing a free and appropriate public education.

### **1301.03 Target Population**

DORS counselors will provide information about DORS, including referral and application procedures, to students enrolled in public and private secondary schools and State-operated programs who meet one of the following criteria:

- a. Receiving special education services defined in an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- b. Not receiving special education services but who have a disability pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and who may be receiving services and/or accommodations as required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (i.e., 504 Plan).
- c. Not receiving special education services or accommodations as required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, but who have serious health conditions (e.g., sickle cell anemia, respiratory dysfunctions, etc.).

DORS considers individuals less than age 22 at application for DORS services to be "Transitioning" students.

### **1301.04 Outreach Responsibilities**

DORS managers and counselors are responsible for developing cooperative working relationships with local education staff, which include:

- a. DORS counselor liaison assignments to all public secondary schools and State-operated programs. Liaison assignments may be established with private secondary schools as appropriate.

The DORS liaison counselor and DORS managers shall establish linkages within each school with the following individuals:

1. Chairperson of special education
  2. School principal
  3. Transition coordinator/teacher
  4. Guidance counselor for juniors and seniors
  5. School health personnel
  6. Pupil personnel workers assigned to the school
  7. Other school-based personnel determined appropriate by the DORS liaison counselor and manager
- b. Information sharing activities such as:
    1. Presentations to and cross-training with local school staff regarding DORS eligibility requirements, referral process, service provision and other related issues.
    2. Participation in school-based transition activities, including conferences and meetings.
    3. Participation in informal and formal presentations to Partner for Success Centers (local parent information and training centers), Parents' Place of Maryland (the Statewide Parent Training and Information Center) and local workforce investment boards as well as other parent groups and student advocacy groups.
    4. Serving in an advisory capacity to facilitate development of appropriate referrals (e.g., for students at risk of withdrawing from school).
    5. Providing consultation to local education staff regarding particularly challenging or complex situations prior to and after referral.

- c. Participating on Local Coordinating Councils, as assigned by DORS regional management, when appropriate to help facilitate transition to and provision of appropriate adult services for students returning from out-of-state placements.

### **1301.05 Student Referrals and Intake for VR Employment Services**

Referral and intake procedures specified in **RSM 2, Section 400** apply to students with disabilities. Additional referral procedures and information follow:

- a. Students may refer themselves or be referred by school personnel, family members, guardians or other interested persons.
- b. When a student is referred for DORS services by sources other than the school, the DORS counselor will notify the appropriate school personnel of the referral, contingent upon the appropriate authorization for release of information (see **RSM 2, Section 200**).
- c. DORS managers and liaison counselors shall establish referral procedures with school officials to assure that:
  - 1. Student referrals shall be processed in a timely manner to assure a smooth transition from the educational setting.
  - 2. Referrals from school personnel include pertinent and available school-based assessment information, including but not limited to psychological evaluations, vocational evaluations, medical or specialty screenings and 504 plans, if applicable.
- d. The DORS counselor will arrange a meeting with the student and the student's parent/guardian to conduct an initial interview and begin to develop a guidance and counseling relationship, in accordance with **RSM 2, Section 400**.

For most students, employment will be the goal of VR services. If employment is not the choice of the student and family at this time, the DORS counselor shall provide information about Independent Living services provided by Maryland Centers for Independent Living, along with contact information.

- e. The DORS counselor will explain the goals of VR employment services and the concept of informed choice and how they will support the student's transition and career plans. Discussions will also include the role of related community services which might be of assistance to the student.

### **1301.06 Joint Sharing and Use of Evaluations and Assessments**

DORS is required to use existing information to the greatest degree possible in the determination of eligibility and priority for services as well as rehabilitation needs. In keeping with this requirement, DORS staff will work with the student, family, school staff and community resources to obtain such information upon receipt of written authorization. DORS counselors shall request DORS management consultation if there is a delay in receiving school records.

### **1301.07 Eligibility Determination and Order of Selection Category Assignment**

Eligibility for VR employment services shall be determined as indicated in **RSM 2, Section 500**. In addition, the determination of severity of disability and Order of Selection category assignment shall be made concurrently with or prior to the eligibility determination (see **RSM 2, Section 500**).

A student's status in special education (IEP), as a student with a disability pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (504 plan), or as a student with a significant health condition does not necessarily mean that the student is an individual with a significant or most significant disability. An IEP alone is not

sufficient to determine eligibility for VR employment services; additional disability-related documentation must be obtained.

For purposes of eligibility determination, the DORS counselor may accept a signed report of a certified school psychologist to substantiate intellectual ability, learning patterns, achievement, motivation, and personality factors related to learning problems in an educational setting.

### **1301.08 Development of the IPE for Students with Disabilities**

Policies and procedures in **RSM 2, Section 600** and **Section 700** apply to students who have been determined eligible for services and can be served under the order of selection in the development of the **Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)**. In addition, the following procedures apply to the development of the **IPE**, as indicated:

- a. **Time frame** – The **IPE** must be developed for students determined eligible for DORS services who can be served under the Order of Selection prior to provision of in-school rehabilitation/pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS), consistent with **Section 1301.09**, and within 90 days of eligibility or off-delayed date.
- b. **Coordination with IEP for students in special education** – **IPE** development must be coordinated with the IEP for each student receiving special education services who is determined eligible for VR employment services who is able to be served under the Order of Selection.
- c. **Specificity of the Employment Goal** – In development of the **IPE**, the employment goal will be as specific as reasonably possible. Consideration will be given to assessments which may have been completed through DORS or as part of the school program, and the IEP for students in special education. The interests, capabilities and informed choice of the individual shall also be considered.

If the individual is uncertain of the employment goal, a more general goal (e.g., a job grouping such as “clerical” or “allied health”) may be indicated as the employment goal on the **IPE**. In this instance, assessment activities such as those indicated in **RSM 2, Section 602** should be considered as services on the **IPE**, with the objective being to identify the specific employment goal.

Once the specific employment goal is identified, an **IPE Amendment** shall be prepared in accordance with **RSM 2, Section 604** to reflect that goal.

- d. Participation in school-based meetings:
  1. **Coordination of services** – To facilitate the coordination of services, the DORS counselor should attend and participate in meetings concerning the student’s progress whenever possible, with emphasis on the final IEP Team meeting for students in special education. (**Note:** Prior parental consent for DORS counselors to attend IEP team meetings is not required since DORS is part of the Maryland State Department of Education.)
  2. **Work-based experiences** – DORS staff shall promote inclusion of work-based experiences in the IEP for students with whom they are working.
- e. Exit Document/Summary of Performance:
  1. **Requirement** – The **Maryland Exit Document** is a companion document to the high school diploma or certificate for students in special education which provides a summary of the student's academic achievement and functional performance and recommendations on how to assist the student in reaching post-secondary goals. It is required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.

2. **DORS contribution** – DORS counselors shall contribute to the **Maryland Exit Document** as appropriate, through attendance at IEP meetings and assistance in planning for post-secondary education or employment. In working with school staff, DORS counselors shall endeavor to assure that vocational preferences and work experiences are included along with needed supports.
3. **Copy for DORS record** – The DORS counselor shall request a copy of the Exit Document from the student for the DORS record of services.

### **1301.09 In-School Rehabilitation Services**

DORS may provide goods and services to students in secondary school in support of career-connected activities.

- a. Such goods and services may include career assessment services, maintenance and/or transportation (M&T) in support of career-related activities, assistive technology (AT) to support career exploration or experiences, and job coaching.
- b. Provision of in-school rehabilitation services requires consideration of comparable services and benefits, and may require IPE approval.

### **1301.10 Assistive Technology (AT)**

The DORS counselor shall have the student transition from high school with the student's AT device. This requires the assessment and prescription of AT no later than the beginning of the final school year in order for the device to be procured and the student trained on its use. Typically, the local educational personnel would assess, prescribe, and train. DORS would then include the required AT on the **IPE** and purchase the AT consistent with DORS policy and State procurement regulations. In some instances, DORS may participate in the AT assessment and provide supplemental training to the student.

DORS and school personnel shall work collaboratively to:

- a. Determine whether AT assessment is needed and the adequacy of any previously completed AT assessments.
- b. Assure that any recommended AT is appropriate for the student and will meet their needs.

### **1301.11 Financial Responsibilities**

All DORS financial policies and procedures apply to students with disabilities. See **RSM 3, Section 1000** and **Section 1100**, respectively.

## **1302 Services for Transitioning Individuals not in Secondary School at Application**

DORS provides VR employment services to young people with disabilities who are less than 22 years of age at application, whether or not they are in secondary school. For those not in secondary school, services are provided consistent with eligibility, priority of service and plan requirements in **RSM 2, Section 400, Section 500** and **Section 600**, and consistent with the following:

- a. The timeframe for **IPE** development (120 days) applies.
- b. Provision of career counseling by the DORS counselor is particularly important since individuals in this age range will have at best limited employment experience.

- c. Engagement with parents/guardians is an important role for DORS counselors working with young people with disabilities, as appropriate.
- d. The full array of services (see **RSM 2, Section 700**), including post-secondary education (see **RSM 2, Section 1500**), shall be considered and provided as appropriate.

### **1303 AWARE™ for Transitioning Students**

Be sure to indicate the appropriate special program for all transitioning youth.