POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

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1501 DORS and Post-Secondary Education

Training in institutions of post-secondary education can make a significant difference for individuals with disabilities in achieving employment, independence and economic self-sufficiency. Post-secondary education includes community/junior colleges, four-year colleges and universities, proprietary/private career schools and technical institutes, with online, on-site and hybrid programs. Policy and procedures in this section apply to:

a. Post-secondary education training programs taken for credit toward a degree or a certificate.

b. Non-credit programs taken to achieve a specific employment related credential and, in the case of developmental classes, to qualify for credit-based post-secondary education.

Note: The Workforce & Technology Center (WTC) also provides post-secondary career training programs and should be considered when exploring options. See RSM 2, Section 1200 and WTC on InDORS.

Research confirms that individuals with disabilities who have educational credentials beyond secondary school have a better chance of long-term employment and establishing careers, thereby entering or re-entering the mainstream of society and discontinuing or avoiding dependence on public benefits. The Division fully supports post-secondary education for consumers for whom it is appropriate and necessary for their employment goal, and works in partnership with institutions of post-secondary education in promoting and facilitating the success of consumers/students.

a. **Informed Choice** – The counselor will provide career counseling to assist the individual in acquiring information necessary to make informed choices regarding the selection of the employment goal, services and service providers consistent with the strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests of the individual. The counselor shall provide information about DORS policies, including post-secondary education policies, which may impact decision-making about choices. While at times DORS may not be able to pay for a specific choice the consumer may want to make, because of policy or funding issues, the consumer's preferences are always an important part of planning for their services and employment.

b. **Preference for in-state, public institutions** – As a state agency with limited resources and a waiting list for services, DORS has a preference for provision of post-secondary education services in public institutions in Maryland. With justification and approval, consumers may be assisted with post-secondary education in private and/or out-of-state institutions.

c. **Accreditation requirement** – DORS supports only post-secondary education programs that are accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency, industry-based or Department of Veterans Affairs accreditation (e.g., Microsoft) and/or approved by the Maryland Higher
Education Commission (MHEC) and approved by the Division (see RSM 3, Section 1007). An exception may be considered for short-term training related to a specific job offer, and requires approval of the Office Director.

1502 Post-Secondary Education Terminology

1502.01 Educational Expenses

Educational expenses are costs related to post-secondary education which can be considered by DORS for funding. Determined on an individual basis consistent with DORS policy, they may include tuition and mandatory fees, books and supplies, room and board (on an exception basis only), the cost of commuting, and other related expenses. Educational expenses are enumerated on the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form.

1502.02 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

This is the form required by the U.S. Department of Education, Student Financial Assistance Programs for students requesting financial aid from participating institutions. Eligible individuals requesting assistance from DORS to pay for post-secondary education are required to apply for financial aid (see Section 1506.02) each year. For more information about the federal Student Financial Assistance Programs and the FAFSA, visit the FAFSA website.

1502.03 Student Aid Report (SAR)

This is a report sent to the student verifying information from the FAFSA and indicating eligibility for certain grants and specifying the amount (the Expected Family Contribution) the student and family are required to contribute to higher education costs, according to the Higher Education Act, as amended. Individuals requesting financial assistance from DORS for post-secondary education are required to provide the DORS counselor a copy of the SAR each year, except when:

- The Financial Aid Information Exchange (RS-5a) form completed by the institution documents receipt of federal financial aid, or
- The consumer is not eligible for financial aid because he/she already has a bachelor’s degree.

1502.04 Grants and Scholarships

Grants and scholarships are financial support for educational programs provided by sources other than DORS which does not need to be repaid and which can be applied to the school the individual will be attending. Grants and scholarships for which the individual qualifies are indicated by the institution’s financial aid administrator on the Financial Aid Information Exchange (RS-5a) form and are to be included on the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form. Scholarships based on merit (e.g., National Merit Scholarships) are not included on the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form.

1502.05 Work-Study and Loans

Through the application for federal financial aid, students with demonstrated financial need may be offered the opportunity to work in exchange for money for college expenses. Likewise, students and their families may be offered low interest loans. While DORS does not require that individuals take out loans or work in work-study programs, students may choose to use these means to defray educational costs.
1502.06 In-State School

An "in-state" school is a public institution of post-secondary education that is located in Maryland. There are no post-secondary schools located outside of Maryland that are considered "in-state."

1502.07 Disability Support Services

Staff of community colleges, four-year colleges and universities responsible for confirming disability status of students who self-reporting disability, and facilitating provision of on-campus reasonable accommodations based on relevant documentation.

1502.08 Developmental Courses

Non-credit (usually below 100 level) courses which may be required by an institution in preparation for college level, credit courses.

1502.09 Placement Testing

Testing used primarily by community colleges to determine whether prospective students require developmental courses or are prepared to begin credit courses. Nationally available placement tests may assist DORS counselors in determining to what degree a consumer is academically prepared for college level study. WTC is approved to administer the ACCUPLACER® test for DORS consumers:

The ACCUPLACER® System – ACCUPLACER® is a comprehensive battery of tests designed to provide information about students’ English, reading, mathematics and computer skills. Tests within the ACCUPLACER® system are delivered over the Internet and are used extensively by high schools, community colleges, four-year colleges, and technical schools around the world. The primary function of the ACCUPLACER® assessments is to assist with determining if students are prepared for a college-level course or if they would benefit from a developmental course.

1503 Training Services in Institutions of Post-Secondary Education

DORS supports individuals in post-secondary education in many ways, depending on the approved employment goal, disability factors and DORS policy. Such assistance may include provision of:

a. Financial assistance for tuition, fees and books consistent with financial need.

b. Auxiliary aids for the individual’s use while in school (aside from in-class accommodations provided by the school), such as a note taker for use in completing assignments.

c. Funding of accommodations to enable participation in educationally-related, out-of-class activities (e.g., participation in a study group or professional organization meeting).

d. Guidance and counseling throughout the period of enrollment.

e. Disability-related services (e.g., psychotherapy, to ensure the student is able to focus on academics).

f. Assistance with maintenance and transportation costs.

g. Personal assistance services.

Post-secondary educational institutions have the responsibility to assure that all of their programs are accessible to individuals with disabilities, including provision of in-class reasonable accommodations and access to course content required by students with disabilities (see RSM 2, Section 706.03).
1504 Training Service Requirements

DORS may provide financial assistance for training services in institutions of post-secondary education consistent with the following requirements.

1504.01 Relationship to the Employment Goal

The training/education must be required for achievement of the employment goal on an approved Individualized Plan for Employment (RS-6h).

1504.02 Evaluating the Resources and Capabilities of the Individual

Post-secondary training (two-year college degree or vocational certificate programs, four-year college/university, or career school on a credit or non-credit basis) must be consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests.

a. If the student has completed a high school diploma program with at least a B average (3.00 out of 4.00), no further assessment is needed to support post-secondary education.

b. If the student has completed high school with less than a B average (less than 3.00 out of 4.00) consider utilizing placement testing (available at community colleges and WTC) to confirm readiness for post-secondary education, as well as reviewing SAT or ACT scores, if available.

c. If the student has a GED, utilize placement testing (available at community colleges and WTC) to confirm readiness for post-secondary education.

d. Review of existing, relevant information, such as psychological evaluations, school records, college transcripts, SAT and/or ACT scores, and documentation of acceptance to a four-year college/university may contribute to decision making about post-secondary education.

e. When there are complex factors and/or insufficient existing relevant information, consideration may be given to formal assessments and/or referral to WTC for a college assessment, which may include placement testing.

f. For academic majors which require higher level mathematics and science courses, the DORS counselor shall review and evaluate information such as SAT scores, transcripts and other findings which support the individual's ability to succeed in technical level course work.

1504.03 Analysis of Information

a. **Trial Semester Supported by DORS** – If review of school achievement, academic background and/or placement testing indicates the consumer may have difficulty succeeding in college level courses (e.g., if placement testing indicates a need for one or two semesters of developmental courses), consideration may be given to DORS financial support for a trial semester/grading period. The DORS counselor will work with the individual and the academic advisor of the institution to identify appropriate courses to be taken during the trial semester/grading period, on a full-time basis unless disability factors require part-time attendance. DORS financial assistance for a subsequent semester/grading period will depend on the grades achieved (see Section 1513).

b. **Trial Semester at Consumer’s Expense** – If review of school achievement, academic background and/or placement testing indicates post-secondary education is not a realistic goal for the individual (e.g., more than two semesters of developmental courses needed), the counselor shall provide vocational guidance and counseling to assist in exploring (1) employment options that do not require post-secondary education and (2) Adult Basic Education resources in the community. In the event the individual still wishes to pursue post-secondary education and demonstrate their ability to do so, the individual will be required to attend a trial
semester/grading period at their own expense. The DORS counselor will work with the individual and the academic advisor of the institution to identify appropriate courses to be taken during the trial semester/grading period, on a full time basis unless disability factors require part-time attendance. DORS financial assistance for a subsequent semester/grading period will depend on the grades achieved (see Section 1513).

c. If the individual cannot gain admittance to a Maryland community college transfer program or a four-year program in Maryland with the required curriculum for the employment goal:

1. Carefully review whether the individual has the resources and capabilities to succeed in post-secondary education, as described in Section 1504.

2. Evaluate the employment goal and the required level of training to reach it.

1505 Role of the Counselor

Following are essential aspects of the DORS counselor’s role related to post-secondary education:

a. Provide career counseling to support the consumer’s informed choice about the employment goal, services and providers. Assist the individual in thoroughly exploring pros and cons of employment options for consideration (see RSM 2, Section 602).

b. The counselor shall provide guidance to the consumer in exploring:

1. The types of training that would enable the consumer to achieve employment goals under consideration (e.g., certificate program, community college).

2. The specific training programs, with emphasis on those within the consumer’s home area, at which the types of training needed to achieve the employment goals under consideration are available (e.g., community college, local four-year college, WTC). See MarylandOnline.org for descriptions of distance learning which may meet consumer needs.

c. Assist the consumer in selecting a specific employment goal, and assist the individual in thoroughly exploring whether post-secondary education is required for the employment goal and, if so, in determining what major and curriculum will best prepare the individual for employment.

d. Gather information to determine if the individual has the strengths, resources, abilities and capabilities to succeed in post-secondary education. See Section 1504.02.

e. Determine if assistive technology (AT) is needed for the individual to have access to post-secondary education. While the post-secondary institution has the responsibility to provide in-class accommodations (see h(1) below), DORS may provide assistive technology needed by the individual outside of the classroom setting. AT that DORS may provide to an individual for access is not included on the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form but is included on the IPE (see Section 1510.01(f)).

If consultation is needed with WTC Rehabilitation Technology Services regarding AT for a student, be sure to contact WTC four months prior to the beginning of the semester.

f. Work cooperatively with the financial aid administrator, the coordinator of disability services, the individual student and, as appropriate, the individual’s family or authorized representative to assist the student in applying for financial aid for post-secondary education, determining the amount of Division financial participation, assessing progress in the educational program and assessing progress toward the employment goal.
g. Be sure that supports are in place and are included on the IPE (e.g., continuation of therapy and/or medication) to address disability issues and assist the individual in maintaining stability so that he/she has the best chance for academic success.

h. Clarify disability-related needs that can be anticipated in the post-secondary education setting:

1. Discuss the role of the Disability Services Coordinator at the institution of post-secondary education. Be sure that the individual understands that it is the responsibility of the Disability Services Coordinator to arrange required in-class reasonable accommodations/access to course content at the school based on federal law and regulation and the policies and procedures of the institution. Also, the individual should be advised that “in-class” accommodations appropriate in a college/university setting might be different than those provided during high school. Encourage the individual to contact the Disability Services Coordinator. Complete the Reasonable Accommodation Information Exchange (RS-5c) form as appropriate.

2. Anticipate needs for out-of-class accommodations (e.g., a reader to assist with studying) and discuss the Division’s responsibility to provide such supports and include them as appropriate in the IPE.

i. Advise the individual of the required procedures and responsibilities related to Division support for post-secondary education. The Post-Secondary Education Fact Sheet (RS-6d) shall be provided to augment discussion of this information. The AWARE™ College General Information letter should also be used when individuals request information about DORS support of participants in post-secondary education.

j. Determine Division financial assistance according to relevant policy and procedures.

k. Meet with the individual prior to each semester to:

1. Review grades and progress toward the agreed upon certificate/degree.

2. Plan coursework.

3. Address any required prerequisites, remedial courses, repeated courses, withdrawals, and "incompletes," and assure that the student completes related requirements so as to not delay completion of the certificate/degree.

4. Discuss disability issues and facilitate provision of supports and reasonable accommodations needed and/or continuation of those which are in place.

5. Emphasize the employment outcome on the IPE.

6. Offer support and encourage self-advocacy.

7. Complete the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form for the next semester to determine DORS funding and the individual’s contribution.

An AWARE™ College Checklist letter is available to assist in communicating with participants who are in post-secondary education programs.

l. With the student, annually review the IEP, considering all relevant factors, including whether or not:

1. The employment goal is still viable.
2. Time frames on the IPE are being met.

3. Disability-related supports are in place and adequate.

4. There is a need for an IPE Amendment.

All Annual Reviews for Post-Secondary Education require supervisory signature.

1506 Notification of Responsibilities of the Individual

The counselor shall inform individuals of the following responsibilities and shall advise them that failure to fulfill these responsibilities will result in denial or discontinuation of DORS funding.

1506.01 Related Policies and Procedures

The counselor will advise the individual of the policies and procedures relevant to the financial participation by the individual and the Division in the cost of training and related services in institutions of post-secondary education.

1506.02 Requirements and Responsibilities of the Individual

The counselor shall inform the individual of the following requirements and responsibilities, which are included on the Post-Secondary Education Fact Sheet (RS-6d) and are addressed in the AWARE™ College General Information letter:

a. Apply annually for financial assistance through the institution of post-secondary education within established time frames in order to be considered for financial assistance from the Division. (Division financial assistance for an individual who has not met required deadlines for applying for financial aid requires supervisory approval.) Provide the DORS counselor a copy of the SAR each year, if required (see Section 1502.03).

b. When arranging to begin a program at an institution of post-secondary education, provide the counselor with a letter of acceptance and proposed course of study at least 60 days prior to the beginning of the semester/grading period so that there is sufficient time to plan and determine whether and to what extent DORS can provide financial assistance. While Division staff will make every effort to assist individuals who request services less than 60 days prior to the beginning of the semester/grading period, DORS financial assistance may be delayed until the next semester/grading period for last-minute requests. Individuals who require assistive technology must contact the counselor at least 120 days or four months prior to the beginning of the semester/grading period so that there is sufficient time to acquire needed assistive technology.

c. Maintain satisfactory academic progress toward a degree or certificate program as stipulated in Section 1513 and remain in "good standing" with the institution of post-secondary education. To confirm and document progress, provide the rehabilitation counselor a copy of the grade report or transcript and proposed course of study upon the completion of each semester/grading period.

d. Provide the DORS counselor with authorization, by signing Part A of the Financial Aid Information Exchange (RS-5a) form, to exchange information with the financial aid administrator related to enrollment status, credits to be taken, grants and scholarships, and whether a tuition waiver applies.

e. Apply any financial assistance (other than loans) received toward training and related expenses.
f. Participate in the cost of training and related services in institutions of post-secondary education, when required.

g. Prior to each semester/grading period, discuss the proposed course of study and its relationship to the employment goal, and progress toward the certificate/degree with the DORS counselor.

h. Discuss with the DORS counselor any requested change in major or course of study, considering the impact on the employment goal, any required extension in the academic program and whether the IPE would need to be amended.

1507 Special Circumstances: Post-Secondary Education

1507.01 Graduate School

The Division may provide financial assistance for graduate school only when a graduate degree is the commonly recognized standard for entry into the field which is the employment goal on an approved Individualized Plan for Employment. Financial assistance for graduate-level programs requires approval of the Office of Field Services Director or Office for Blindness & Vision Services Director, as applicable, prior to the approval of the IPE including an employment goal that requires graduate credentials. When graduate school is approved, the policies and procedures in this section apply.

1507.02 Previous Degree

Division support for a post-secondary degree is provided only for individuals who have not already earned a degree.

a. This does not apply to IPEs including a bachelor's degree when the individual achieves an associate’s degree as a step toward the bachelor's degree.

b. In exceptional circumstances when the disability precludes achievement of an employment outcome with current credentials, consideration may be given to Division financial assistance for another degree. Administrative approval is required for an additional degree beyond the first bachelors.

c. Selected courses provided to update skills and improve employment opportunities may be provided on an individual basis with the approval of the counselor. Higher-level approval depends on other approval requirements (see RSM 3, Section 1005).

1507.03 Full-time/Part-time Attendance

The individual must be attending on a full-time basis, so that employment is achieved in a timely manner. Exceptions for part-time attendance related to disability factors or other compelling reasons will be considered on an individual basis and require supervisory approval (for up to two semesters/grading periods) and administrative approval (beyond two semesters/ grading periods). Medical documentation related to the need for part-time attendance shall be updated at least annually.

1507.04 Developmental Courses and Core Program Requirements

a. Developmental courses must be completed as soon as possible and within trial semesters (see Section 1504.03).

b. Division support for more than one semester/grading period of developmental/remedial courses requires administrative approval.

c. Core requirements shall be completed as soon as possible within the planned course of study.
1507.05 Fee-for-Service Disability Support Programs

Some post-secondary education institutions offer, for an additional fee, programs which provide comprehensive support to students with certain disabilities while they are enrolled in full-time, credit courses. These programs are over and above the usual services provided by Disability Support Services staff described in Section 1502.07. Consideration may be given on an individual basis to providing financial assistance for such programs (as "out-of-class" supports) for students consistent with Section 1504. Disability Support Programs, which enable access to post-secondary education for some individuals with disabilities, are included on the IPE, but not on the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form (see Section 1510.01). Administrative approval is required.

1507.06 Non-degree Courses

Selected courses that are not part of degree programs may be authorized when such courses are part of an assessment to determine rehabilitation needs or identified on the IPE and necessary for the attainment of the employment goal.

1507.07 Comprehensive Transition Program (CTP)

Comprehensive Transition Programs (CTPs) are federally recognized inclusive post-secondary education programs specifically designed for students with intellectual disabilities.

- National list of CTPs

DORS may provide financial assistance to support students or adults attending a CTP while receiving VR services, if it is found to be a necessary service in support of the individual's employment goal, as determined by the individual and the DORS counselor, and identified on the IPE. DORS financial assistance will be considered on an exception basis if the post-secondary education program is awaiting federal review in order to become a CTP.

1507.08 Summer School/Minimesters

DORS financial assistance for summer school and/or "minimesters" shall be provided only when the courses to be taken:

a. Are not available during the fall or spring semesters or other standard grading period, and/or

b. Will enable the individual to graduate earlier, or

c. Are part of a year-round school program schedule, requiring summer coursework to complete the program within two or four years, as applicable.

Supervisory review of the course of study and approval of summer or "minimester" courses is required. The counselor should consider encouraging students to participate in work activities related to the employment goal during the summer and other school breaks in order to gain employment experience.

1507.09 Tutoring

Tutoring may be provided to an individual enrolled in post-secondary education consistent with RSM 2, Section 715.05. In addition, it shall be provided only when:

a. It has been demonstrated that peer tutoring and other campus supports have not met the needs;

b. Recommended by the course instructor; and
c. The individual is at risk of a grade of D or lower.

The Division will not fund tutoring as a general academic support so that an individual can maintain an above average grade point average.

1507.10 Delay of Graduation/Completion

A number of factors may contribute to a delay in graduation from the time frame established on the IPE. These include illness, change of major, patterns of withdrawal from classes, unavailability of courses and other factors. The DORS counselor and student will be able to minimize delays in completion of the program by carefully reviewing the course requirements and the individual's progress each semester, revisiting the employment goal, and assuring that disability supports are in place (see Section 1505).

1507.11 Unusual Curriculum

If the individual is interested in an unusual curriculum or course of study which is not available at a public post-secondary institution in Maryland:

a. Fully explore the employment goal to be sure employment is realistic in this field.

b. Consider related courses of study which are more readily available.

c. Consider the Academic Common Market to determine if the unusual curriculum is available in a nearby state at that state's in-state rates (see Maryland Higher Education Commission website).

1508 Requirement to Apply for Financial Assistance

According to federal VR regulations, training and related services in institutions of post-secondary education (including universities, colleges, community/junior colleges, vocational schools, technical institutes and proprietary/private career schools) for eligible individuals under an IPE will be purchased only after the individual has completed the application process for financial aid through the institution's financial aid office and has applied for other grants and scholarships for which the individual might qualify. Application for financial assistance from other sources, including grants and scholarships, must be made annually.

Students and families may choose to take out educational loans or participate in work-study programs to help defray educational costs.

1508.01 Tuition Waiver

Maryland law provides for tuition waivers at community colleges for individuals who meet all of the following criteria:


b. Have applied for financial aid and, if received, have used any grants and scholarships toward tuition and fees at the school prior to application of the tuition waiver.

c. Are attending courses where there are at least 10 paying students.

The waiver applies up to certain credit limitations.

DORS counselors must assure that all consumers interested in attending post-secondary education, including those attending a community college, apply for financial aid through the institution (see Section 1508). DORS shall request that the financial aid office document eligibility for tuition waiver on the Financial Aid Information Exchange (RS-5a) form.
While a tuition waiver may reduce the cost of post-secondary education for certain DORS consumers, if DORS is providing any supports for the college program the counselor shall be fully involved in selection of the employment goal on the IPE and monitoring progress during each semester/term to assure that the individual is progressing toward employment in a timely manner.

Consistent with the employment goal on an approved Individualized Plan for Employment, DORS may cover tuition which is over and above the number of credits covered by any tuition waiver or in instances when insufficient numbers of students have enrolled for a course and the tuition waiver does not apply.

1508.02 Recipients of SSI and/or SSDI

a. Recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) are exempt from financial participation in the cost of rehabilitation services (see RSM 3, Section 1400) but are required to apply for financial aid through the institution to determine eligibility for grants and scholarships.

b. In determining whether to allow an exception to DORS policy and include room and board as an Educational Expense according to Section 1510.01(d), DORS managers may consider the availability of comparable benefits, including but not limited to SSI and or SSDI cash benefits for maintenance and living expenses of individuals determined to be dependent students according to the Higher Education act, as amended.

1508.03 Exception to the Requirement to Apply for Financial Assistance

Individuals are not required to complete the financial aid application process through the institution’s financial aid office if:

a. The individual is seeking admittance to an institution not participating in the federal student financial aid process (this requires supervisory approval); or

b. The individual is enrolling for non-degree courses (i.e., selected courses that are not part of a degree program) (see Section 1507.06).

1509 Application Procedure for Financial Assistance

The following procedures will be followed in applying for financial assistance from DORS for post-secondary education expenses:

a. The individual shall apply for admission to and financial assistance from the institution of post-secondary education within the time frames established by the financial aid office, and shall provide a copy of the SAR to the DORS counselor as required (see Section 1502.03). The consumer may apply for federal financial aid by completing the FAFSA online.

b. The rehabilitation counselor will complete the introductory section of the Financial Aid Information Exchange (RS-5a) form indicating the period of attendance.

c. The individual or, as appropriate, the individual’s representative, will sign Part A, "Consent for Exchange of Information," of the Financial Aid Information Exchange (RS-5a) authorizing the exchange of information between the counselor and financial aid administrator.

d. The eligible individual/individual’s family shall complete the Financial Statement (RS-5d) to determine the individual/family annual contribution for services. Individuals receiving SSI and/or SSDI are excluded from financial participation. See RSM 3, Section 1400, Determination of Financial Need and Participation in Cost of Services.
e. If the individual’s parents/family members are required to provide financial information on the
FAFSA (i.e., the student is not considered "independent" for purposes of federal student
financial aid), the parents/family members must provide financial information on the Financial
Statement (RS-5d) to determine the individual/family annual contribution for post-secondary
education expenses. This does not apply to individuals who receive SSI and/or SSDI.

f. The financial aid administrator will complete and sign Part B of the Financial Aid Information
Exchange (RS-5a) form and return it to the DORS counselor.

g. Part B of the Financial Aid Information Exchange (RS-5a) will identify:
   • Enrollment status (full or part time; number of credits).
   • Cost of tuition, mandatory fees, room and board.
   • Grants and scholarships awarded, if applicable.
   • Tuition waiver and amount awarded to the individual, if applicable.

1510 Determination of Division Funding

a. DORS funding for certificate programs, associate of arts programs and the first two years or 60
   credits of a bachelor's degree shall be at the in-county rate of the community college attended,
   as applicable (see Attachment 1500-1 for tuition and fees for all Maryland Community Colleges);
   for consumers preferring to attend a four-year institution for the first 60 credits, DORS funding
   may not exceed the in-county cost of tuition and mandatory fees at Montgomery College.
   Exceptions to pay in excess of the in-county cost of tuition and mandatory fees at Montgomery
   College shall be based on disability-related issues or program availability and require approval
   of the regional/program director.

   If the required curriculum is only available where out-of-county rates would apply, contact the
   college to ascertain whether there is a special arrangement with the other counties for less
   common courses/curricula. Request an exception as appropriate.

b. DORS funding for four-year colleges (after the first 60 credits and when exceptions are made for
   payment of four-year institution rates for the first 60 credits) shall be at the rate of the in-state
   public college/university attended, if applicable (see Attachment 1500-1 for tuition and fees for
   all Maryland four-year public colleges and universities). Funding for private or out-of-state post-
   secondary institutions may not exceed the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) in-state
   rates. An exception to include in excess of the UMCP in-state rates for private or out-of-state
   institutions on the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education
   (RS-5b) form requires approval of the Director of the Division.

c. The amount of financial assistance to be provided to the individual by the Division shall be
   calculated using the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary
   Education (RS-5b) form. The DORS counselor will complete this determination each
   semester/grading period, will indicate the specific semester or grading period on the
   Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form and
   calculate or prorate dollar amounts on the form accordingly.

1510.01 Educational Expenses

"Educational Expenses" will be based on the specific costs of the following, as appropriate:

a. Tuition and mandatory fees – Include amounts indicated on the Financial Aid Information
   Exchange (RS-5a) form (in-county community college rates or State college or university rates,
   consistent with Section 1510 and Section 1511; if tuition is waived include only mandatory fees).
   Include tuition/fees for proprietary/private career school based on MHEC posted fees; allowable
   tuition/fees over $2,500 to be determined by DORS Central Office staff: Office of Field Services
b. **Books and supplies** – Include up to $600 per semester/grading period full time; $300 per semester/grading period part time.

c. **Daily commuting costs**:

1. Include commuting expenses to and from the institution for individuals living at home, consistent with RSM 2, Section 717.04: "The amount of funding will be determined with the individual with consideration given to actual expenses anticipated using the most cost-effective means of transportation consistent with the individual's needs and level of independence."

2. Commuting costs are not included for persons receiving on-campus room and board.

Assistance with transportation to a school where the person will reside (i.e., the individual will not live at home) may be considered at the beginning and end of the semester and other times when college/university housing is closed. The maintenance and transportation authority should be used for this purpose (see RSM 3, Section 1105). Do not include such transportation costs as "educational expenses" on the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form.

Per Section 1511, students who prefer to attend private or out-of-state institutions of post-secondary education are responsible for the extra costs of attendance (e.g., transportation costs over and above what DORS would provide if the individual were to attend a local college/university) (see RSM 2, Section 717).

d. **Room and board**:

1. **Living at home** – A student living at home will not be provided maintenance (see RSM 2, Section 717.02). Daily commuting costs may be provided as appropriate (see c. above).

2. **On-campus room and board** – The Division provides financial support toward an individual’s on campus room and board only on an exception basis and only if the individual lives 45 or more miles from the nearest public institution (community college; four-year college) where programs related to the individual's employment goal are available to the individual. Inclusion of room and board as an educational expense on the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form requires prior approval of the DORS Director or designee. The 45-mile policy may be waived by the DORS Director or designee based on disability-related factors or cost-efficiency.

Individuals determined to be "dependent students" per the Higher Education Act (as indicated on the FAFSA and SAR) and who receive SSI and/or SSDI are expected to apply their SSI/SSDI benefits to the cost of room and board. An exception to include room and board on the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form requires prior approval of the DORS Director or designee (see Section 1510.01). ("Dependent students" generally are age 24 or younger, unmarried, not military veterans and without their own dependents – be sure to check the SAR to confirm if parents were required to include their income in applying for financial aid.)

3. **Off-campus room and board** – The Division may provide maintenance payments to the individual for off-campus room and board when the individual has been granted an exception for inclusion of room and board as an educational expense on the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form by the DORS
Director or designees, and circumstances and the informed choice of the individual result in the decision to live off campus.

Maintenance payments for off-campus room and board shall be based on the cost of on-campus room and board at the public in-state institution attended, or the UMCP rate if the individual is attending a private or out-of-state institution.

In arranging for off-campus housing, the counselor will apply the Division’s maintenance procedures for recurring payments (see RSM 3, Section 1105). Be sure to initiate the recurring payment cycle early enough for the consumer to receive payment in time to cover the agreed-upon expenses. If the initial payment cannot be made in time, the DORS counselor shall request management consideration of a petty cash payment. See RSM 3, Attachment 1100-1, Recurring Payment Schedule.

4. **Personal assistance services for students in on-campus or off-campus housing** – Individuals meeting the criteria for financial assistance with on-campus or off-campus housing indicated in (2) and (3) above may be provided financial assistance with personal assistance services if required. See Section 1510.01(f)(1)(a).

e. **Other services** – Other services require Administrative Approval. Included are services not already indicated as Educational Expenses which are necessary for the individual to participate in training at the institution of post-secondary education, and which are subject to financial need, such as childcare and tutoring. Funding for books and supplies in excess of $600 per semester full time and $300 per semester part time may be included as "other" expenses with justification. Policy related to comparable services and benefits applies (see RSM 3, Section 1300).

Qualifications for some services in the "other" category follow:

1. **Tutoring** – See Section 1507.09.

2. **Child care** – may be approved in limited circumstances only after a thorough exploration of comparable benefits through county child care resource centers, Departments of Social Services, and other resources and after consideration of natural supports.

3. **In-class reasonable accommodations** – Institutions of post-secondary education are responsible for provision of in-class reasonable accommodations/ access to course content. The Division will consider providing funding for educationally-related, in-class reasonable accommodations only:

   i. If the institution makes it a matter of public record that provision of reasonable accommodations would be an "undue administrative or financial burden."

   ii. With the approval of the regional/program director or designee – see RSM 3, Section 1005.

Every effort shall be made to assure timely provision of required reasonable accommodations so as to avoid a delay in the eligible individual’s training program.

f. **Educationally-related goods and services not included as "Educational Expenses":**

1. **Educationally-related support services excluded from financial need determination** – (see RSM 3, Section 1403) which are needed by the individual shall be included on the IPE but not on the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form. This applies to personal assistance services, disability-related auxiliary aids/AT (e.g., computer hardware or software required because of the disability), reader or interpreter services required for out-of-class activities, and provision of required text books and class materials needed in alternate formats, particularly for students with
blindness/vision impairment who require Braille or electronic versions of text books and other materials.

i. **Personal Assistance Services** – DORS may assist with costs related to personal assistance services for individuals with significant disabilities who are attending post-secondary education programs, consistent with the following requirements. The consumer must:

   a. Apply for funding through the State’s Personal Assistance/Attendant Care programs as possible comparable benefits.

   b. With the DORS counselor, complete the Personal Assistance Services (PAS) Screening Tool.

   c. Participate in PAS/Attendant Care assessment by a WTC Occupational Therapist.

ii. **Textbooks in Alternate Format** – DORS counselors may order required text books well in advance of the semester for students (i.e., before semester grades may be available) as long as the student’s schedule of classes for the upcoming semester is confirmed by the college/university and required textbooks have been designated.

iii. **Fee-for-Service Disability Support Programs** – DORS may assist with programs which provide comprehensive support to students with certain disabilities while enrolled in full-time, credit courses. See Section 1507.05.

2. **Provision of Non-Adapted Computers for Post-Secondary Education** – Non-adapted computers may be purchased for students in post-secondary education consistent with RSM 2, Section 708. Such purchases are included on the IPE but not the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form. The Financial Need policy (RSM 3, Section 1400) applies.

1510.02 Calculation of Amount of DORS Financial Assistance

After the Educational Expenses have been determined, the rehabilitation counselor will:

a. Add:

1. The Individual/Family Annual Financial Participation from the Financial Statement (RS-5d), excluding any part of the Participation amount which has already been applied to another service or to a previous semester/grading period during the year covered by the Financial Statement (RS-5d). The amount may be prorated if the individual will attend more than one semester/grading period during the year covered by the Financial Statement (RS-5d); this amount is included on line 7 of the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form; and

2. The total amount of grants and scholarships awarded, with the following exceptions, which are not included:

   i. All grants and scholarships based on merit are not included, as specified in the Rehabilitation Act.

   **It is important to request DORS management consultation if it appears that an individual's merit and other scholarships in addition to DORS financial assistance will exceed actual costs.**

   ii. If the consumer is attending a private or out-of-state college or university and DORS funding is calculated based on Montgomery College or University of Maryland College
Park rates, then grants and scholarships specific to attending that private or out-of-state institution are not included.

For example, a DORS consumer is going to Goucher College (private institution); an exception has not been made to use four-year college rates, so Montgomery College rates apply:

i. The Consumer receives a Pell Grant, which he/she can use at Goucher and also could use at Montgomery College or another community college in Maryland; the amount of the Pell Grant is included on line 8 of the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form.

ii. Goucher gives the consumer a scholarship of $1,000 per semester that applies only to Goucher; this $1,000 is not included on line 8 of the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form.

iii. The consumer receives a Very Smart Person Merit Scholarship in the amount of $2,000 per semester; this $2,000 is not included on line 8 of the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form.

3. The amount of any grants and scholarships is provided by the financial aid administrator of the college/university on the Financial Aid Information Exchange (RS-5a) form, and may be prorated if necessary for the specific semester/grading period.

b. Subtract the total of the individual participation (as indicated in a. above) and grants/scholarships from the total of the Educational Expenses. The remainder is the amount of DORS financial assistance for the semester/grading period.

c. Indicate the post-secondary education costs to which the Division’s and the individual/family’s participation amount will be applied, if applicable.

d. Sign and date the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form and have the consumer sign and date the form. Provide a copy to the consumer and the bursar’s office at the post-secondary institution. Scan the signed form into AWARE™.

1510.03 Financial Participation of the Individual

The individual, or if appropriate the individual’s family, will pay for all post-secondary education expenses not funded by the Division or grants and scholarships.

1510.04 Notification of the Individual of the Amount of DORS Financial Assistance

The individual will sign and be provided a copy of the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form, which indicates for each semester/grading period:

a. The amount DORS will contribute toward post-secondary education and to what specific cost it will be applied (e.g., tuition).

b. The amount of the individual’s contribution from the Financial Statement (RS-5d) and how it will be applied.

1511 Attendance at Private or Out-of-State Colleges and Universities

Colleges and universities receiving federal funds are required by law to assure that their programs are fully accessible to all individuals including those with disabilities. Colleges and universities in Maryland educate a diverse population of students, including individuals with various disabilities, and provide sufficient supports so that they can succeed. Colleges and universities in Maryland offer a broad array
of degrees, programs and curricula enabling students to prepare for employment in a wide variety of fields.

Students who prefer to attend private or out-of-state institutions of post-secondary education are responsible for the extra costs of attendance (e.g., transportation costs over and above what DORS would provide if the individual were to attend a local college/university) (see RSM 2, Section 717). The Division may provide financial assistance, as follows:

a. **For individuals in certificate, AA or the first 60 credits of bachelor’s degree programs** – Up to the in-county Montgomery College rate for tuition and fees. Exceptions to provide in excess of the in-county Montgomery College rate for tuition and mandatory fees shall be based on disability-related issues or program availability and require approval of the regional/program director.

b. **For individuals with more than 60 credits who are completing bachelor’s degree programs, and for those for whom an exception has been granted to provide four-year rates for the first 60 credits**, per Section 1510(a) – Up to the in-state rate of the University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) for tuition and fees for a private or out-of-state institution attended by the individual. An exception to include in excess of the UMCP in-state rates on the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form requires approval of the Director of the Division. If out-of-state rates are approved by the Director of DORS, consideration may be given to transportation assistance - see RSM 2, Section 717.

c. **For room and board** – DORS support for room and board at a private or out-of-state institution will be considered only on an exception basis and only if there is no comparable state program (at a community college or four-year college) within commuting distance of the individual's home (see Section 1510.01); room and board shall not exceed University of Maryland, College Park in-state rates, and requires prior approval of the DORS Director or designee.

### 1512 Division Funding for Proprietary/Private Career Schools

The policies and procedures in this section apply to individuals attending proprietary schools and private career schools. DORS supports attendance at Proprietary/Private Career Schools when the course of study is not available at a public institution (community college) or when scheduling of classes makes it more efficient and timely for the student to attend the private career school. DORS supports attendance only at Proprietary/Private Career Schools approved by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) or a similar commission of another state; exceptions require approval of the Office Director.

a. **Guidance & Counseling** – The counselor shall provide guidance and counseling and, in collaboration with the consumer:

1. Assure that the individual requesting training at a proprietary school has the resources and capabilities to succeed in the program (See Section 1504.02).

2. Consider and research the job market, in consultation with the regional business representative, as appropriate, to determine if there is a likelihood of employment at the completion of training.

3. Review information on the [Maryland Higher Education Commission website](#) about the proprietary/private career school’s rate of completion and rate of employment.

4. Determine if there are other training programs that would meet the consumer’s needs, including at community colleges, and their cost.
5. Assure that the consumer understands explicitly any financial obligation he/she may have for each training option, including the proprietary school, before finalizing training plans.

b. The Counselor shall complete the Proprietary School Documentation/Justification (RS-6t) form.

1. DORS standards for approval and accreditation of providers of vocational training services (i.e., national accreditation, MHEC approval, industry-based or Department of Veterans Affairs accreditation) apply to all proprietary/private career schools in accordance with Section 1501 and RSM 3, Section 1007.01. An exception may be considered for short-term training related to a specific job offer, and requires approval of the Office Director.

2. The rate paid by the Division for training services in vocational and proprietary schools will not exceed the provider’s customary charge.

3. Consideration of proprietary/private career school with costs exceeding $2,500 requires consultation with OFS Technical Assistance or OBVS Director or designee who will determine the amount DORS will pay, based on current Montgomery College rates and availability of similar programs.

1513 Continuation, Discontinuation and Resumption of DORS Funding

1513.01 Requirements for Continuation of Division Funding

To be eligible for the continuation of funding by the Division at an institution of post-secondary education, an individual shall:

a. Earn credit on a minimum of 75% of all credits for which the individual registered each semester/grading period.

b. Maintain a minimum average grade of "C" or its equivalent on all credits completed each semester/grading period.

c. Maintain eligibility for financial assistance in accordance with the institution of post-secondary education’s written criteria for satisfactory academic progress toward a degree or certificate.

d. Meet the requirements and responsibilities identified in Section 1506.

Failure to meet the above criteria will result in the discontinuation of Division funding.

1513.02 Discontinuation of Division Funding

Division financial support of post-secondary education will be discontinued if the individual:

a. Was dismissed by an institution of post-secondary education; or

b. Stopped attending an institution of post-secondary education due to the individual’s failure to maintain satisfactory progress in accordance with the institution of higher education’s academic requirements, or financial aid eligibility criteria; or

c. Had Division funding discontinued due to failure to meet the requirements in Section 1513.01.

1513.03 Resumption of Division Funding

Individuals requesting Division funding of post-secondary education following discontinuation of such funding must meet the requirements stated in Section 1513.01 for a minimum of six credits or the equivalent at an institution of higher education at their own expense before being reconsidered for
financial assistance for post-secondary education by the Division. The six credits should include any courses that need to be repeated due to failure. The counselor and individual shall reassess the feasibility of the employment goal on the IPE, assure that sufficient disability-related supports are in place, and amend the IPE if needed.

1514 Ineligibility for Federal Student Aid (Default; Drug Convictions; Certain Non-Citizens)

Individuals may be ineligible for Federal student financial aid if they have previously defaulted on a student loan or if they have certain criminal drug convictions on their record.

1514.01 Defaulting on Student Loans

An individual requesting Division financial assistance for post-secondary expenses who has defaulted on a student loan(s) and has therefore become ineligible to receive financial aid through the institution will be required to pursue deferment of the defaulted loan(s) through appropriate channels. In such situations the counselor will explore the individual’s default status, particularly its relationship to the disability, and will consider efforts the individual has made to resolve the default, the effect of default on release of previously earned credits, and resources which the individual may have to apply to repayment of the loan(s). The Division will not repay a defaulted loan.

If the individual is able to resolve the default and regains eligibility for financial aid, the policies and procedures in this section apply.

If the individual is unable to resolve the default status, Division financial support will be considered only in extraordinary circumstances when the individual has demonstrated good cause for failure to repay the loan(s) and has made good faith efforts to defer repayment or otherwise resolve the issue.

1514.02 Drug Convictions

Drug convictions may result in ineligibility for Federal student aid, depending on time of the occurrence and severity of the conviction. The counselor shall assure that the individual is involved with appropriate treatment and/or recovery activities. Treatment/recovery activities shall be included on the IPE.

1514.03 Certain Non-Citizens

Some non-citizens may be eligible for federal student aid, and some may not, depending on the specific circumstances and the form of documentation the individual has. All non-citizens should complete the FAFSA; even if the individual does not qualify for federal student aid, they may qualify for state or institution based aid. In the event the non-citizen is not eligible for aid, administrative approval will be required for DORS to provide funding for post-secondary education as indicated in Section 1514.04.

1514.04 Approval of Payment for Post-Secondary Education for Individuals Ineligible for Federal Student Aid

Division payment for higher education expenses for an individual ineligible for Federal student aid because of default or drug convictions requires the approval of the regional/program director. In such situations, the procedures in this section apply and the individual must apply for financial aid via the FAFSA each year, except that the individual might not have grants and scholarships included on the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form.

1515 Required Approvals

If higher-level approval is needed, pertinent information and supporting documentation shall be forwarded through supervisory channels.
1515.01 Supervisory Approval

Supervisory approval is required for:

a. All proposed IPEs and all Annual Reviews that include post-secondary training programs.

b. Part-time enrollment for up to two semesters/grading periods.

c. Attendance at a school not participating in the federal Student Financial Assistance Program.

d. Financial assistance for summer school/"minimesters."

e. Financial assistance for an individual who did not meet deadlines for applying for financial aid.

f. Exception to discontinuation of DORS financial assistance because of disability issues.

1515.02 Administrative Approval

Administrative approval (regional/program director or designee) is required as stated in RSM 3, Section 1005. Specific approval requirements related to post-secondary education include:

a. Students ineligible for Federal student aid because of default status, drug convictions or certain non-citizens.

b. Developmental or compensatory services for a second and subsequent semester.

c. Post-secondary degree or certificate for individuals already possessing a degree or certificate.

d. "Other" costs included as "Educational Expenses" on the Determination of DORS Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education (RS-5b) form.

e. Funding of Fee for Services Disability Support Programs, per Section 1507.05.

f. Financial assistance exceeding in-county Montgomery College rates for the first 60 credits of bachelor’s degrees or certificate or AA programs.

  g. Part-time attendance for a third or subsequent semester.

1515.03 Central Office Approval

Approval by the OFS or OBVS Director, as applicable, is required for:

a. Graduate school.

  b. Short term training not accredited by MHEC or a comparable agency in another state which is related to a specific job offer.

1515.04 DORS Director Approval

Approval by the DORS Director or designee is required for:

a. DORS financial support for room and board expenses.

  b. Payment of rates for post-secondary education expenses for private or out-of-state institutions that exceed University of Maryland, College Park in-state rates.