

## **200.00P Referral and Application Procedure**

(Rev. February 1999)

See corresponding policy: 200.00 Referral and Application Policy

Note: Vocational Rehabilitation procedures provide internal guidance for ACCES-VR staff only and create no procedural or substantive rights for any individual or group.

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### **Introduction**

1. The purpose of the referral and application procedure is to ensure rapid and timely eligibility decisions. The referral and application process is an integral part of the eligibility determination process.
2. The objective is to obtain enough information with supporting documentation that will allow the counselor to make a rapid eligibility determination.
3. Referral and application procedures require that ACCES-VR obtain only that information that is necessary to make a timely eligibility determination. If it is possible to obtain information for Individualized Plan for Employment (formerly IWRP, now IPE) development as part of referral and application, that should be done so long as it does not delay the eligibility determination.
4. Available information, including counselor observation and information provided by the individual or individual's representative, should be used to the maximum extent possible.
5. Individuals who are not United States citizens, and want to be considered applicants for ACCES-VR services, must provide the District Office with a copy of a work permit or letter from the United States Department of Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS). This document must clearly provide current permission for the individual to reside in the United States and have the legal right to work in the United States long enough to achieve an employment outcome. Staff should recommend to persons without permission to work in the United States that

they seek the legal right to work in the United States through the INS office prior to applying for services.

6. An individual may apply for ACCES-VR services directly or be referred by another individual or organization when there is evidence of the individual's informed consent. This evidence must show that the individual (or parent if the individual is less than 18 years of age, or legal guardian) understands that a referral is being made to ACCES-VR , and that the reason for the referral is to achieve employment. The evidence must also show that the individual has agreed to the referral.
7. Evidence of informed consent may include a signed release, interagency referral form, a statement from the individual or other evidence of consent/agreement for the referral. In the absence of such evidence, the referral source must be advised that we cannot accept the referral or open a case until we have evidence confirming that the individual is aware of and agrees to the referral.
8. It is not necessary to open a case on the individual at referral, unless the referral meets the conditions for entry into status 02, described in the application procedures. Each district office should develop a mechanism that will result in the assignment of referrals to an individual or team and who will be responsible for communicating with the referred individual and collecting and maintaining documentation for the case record. Status 00 can be used for this purpose, but it is not required to do so. A record of services will be maintained in advance of placing a case in status 02, for documentation, such as the application form, release forms, referral documents, medical reports and case recording. Information provided orally will be recorded in the Orientation Case note or the Background Case Note, including the source and date provided.

## **Referral Procedures**

### **General Information**

When working with referral sources that regularly refer individuals to ACCES-VR , the following procedures should be followed:

1. Inform referral sources in writing of the specific information and supporting materials that are required for application and eligibility including evidence of informed consent. Referral sources can be expected to provide information that directly relates to determining eligibility for services and that will assist with vocational planning leading to an employment outcome. ACCES-VR should request only that information that is customarily available to the referral source within the context of the services that they provide. ACCES-VR should not require that referral sources obtain or create documentation strictly for the ACCES-VR purposes of determining eligibility and defining vocational rehabilitation needs except as the referral source may be willing to do so consistent with agreements with ACCES-VR .
2. Referral sources will often be able to provide information that will be helpful in assessing the individual's impairment(s), functional limitations, impediments to employment and the individual's primary and secondary employment factors. These factors are defined in the ACCES-VR Handbook: Eligibility 202.00 and 202.00P. Primary employment factors include the individual's strengths, resources,

priorities, concerns, abilities, and capabilities. Secondary employment factors include interest and informed choice. Developing information that will assist in assessing these factors at referral will assist with eligibility determination, especially in defining the individual's impediment to employment, which serves as the basis for the individual's requirement of services.

3. In the case of referrals through OASAS or OMH service providers, standard referral criteria and procedures for information exchange have been developed as part of statewide agreements between ACCES-VR and these agencies. District Offices may wish to work collaboratively with these service providers on a local level to assure joint understanding and utilization of the standard referral process, and in local refinement of the process, consistent with the agreements.
4. District Offices may seek to develop local interagency agreements with referral sources that will clarify the roles and responsibilities in a manner consistent with ACCES-VR policy. Specialized referral processes or criteria utilized on a local basis are to be developed collaboratively with referral sources and include a mechanism for cross-training of staff in the procedures. Assistance in the development of local interagency agreements can be obtained by contacting Judith Kleinberg, Interagency Agreements, at (518) 474-1658.
5. District Offices should make available to referral sources ACCES-VR information packets, and where appropriate, the Interagency Referral Form, or Transition Referral Transmittal Form. Additionally, the District Office may develop a customized referral source packet.
6. District Offices should provide training and technical support to referral sources to enable them to make appropriate referrals with sufficient documentation that facilitates the eligibility decision within the 60-day timeline.
7. If referral information is insufficient in that it does not contain information required for eligibility determination that is known to be available through that referral source, Form Letter: RINCOMPL should be used to acquire that information.
8. With an appropriate release of information, District Offices should provide to the referral source copies of ACCES-VR correspondence regarding the status of the referral. This should be based on an agreed upon procedure for information exchange with the referral source.
9. When referral information has been received from a referral source other than the individual without a signed application or a signed letter requesting services, but demonstrates that the referred person is aware of and consenting to the referral, ACCES-VR will send the individual:
  - A. a cover letter and information packet highlighting the services available from ACCES-VR (with a copy of the cover letter to the referral source). Form Letter: REFNEXT should be used as the cover letter;
  - B. a date for a group orientation or individual meeting and/or an application for services; and
  - C. the cover letter should inform the individual that their referral will be regarded as inactive in four weeks if he or she does not respond by either attending the orientation session or submitting the application.

## Referrals from Schools

1. Preferred documentation is that which describes the student's current abilities, work-related limitations and service needs in functional terms that are relevant to vocational rehabilitation and achieving employment. The following information is often available and should be provided by the schools when it is available and necessary:
  - A. A referral transmittal sheet or letter that identifies the student, the school and explains the purpose for the referral;
  - B. The most current Individualized Education Plan (IEP), guidance plan or records of transition planning meetings that describe the transition planning and service process for the student. The IEP is a document that summarizes other data in the student's cumulative record. The section of the IEP that describes the Present Levels of Educational Performance could be a key source of information about current levels of academic/educational achievement and learning characteristics, social development, physical development and management needs (environmental modifications, personal support and special materials). If clarification is needed about a component on the IEP, ask if further elaborative detail is available in the student's cumulative record.
  - C. Language proficiency assessment reports.
  - D. Student medical and health-screening reports, including the most current psychological, psychiatric, or other specialist's disability assessment, if available and relevant;
  - E. Schools do not annually update psychological test reports. Once it is determined that the student has certain disabilities, such as profound mental retardation, repeated psychological testing is not considered necessary. The Committee on Special Education may rely on observational data to update assessments.
  - F. A DSM IV classification of psychiatric conditions is not usually available. If this is required in order to define the individual's impairment and functional limitations, the counselor should inquire if the student is receiving treatment privately from an individual qualified to provide such a diagnosis. If not, the counselor should authorize an appropriate Psychological, Neuro-psychological or Psychiatric evaluation. It should be noted that if school records confirm that the student has an emotional disturbance that results in functional limitations and impediments to employment, then that student will likely require on-going mental health treatment while receiving vocational rehabilitation services to continue the psychological counseling provided on the IEP. Transition planning by the Committee on Special Education should incorporate planning to ensure that the student has access to these supports upon exiting school. It is also appropriate for the ACCES-VR Counselor to discuss this need early on in the referral/application process.
  - G. Reports from related services interventions (e.g., occupational therapy, speech therapy, physical therapy, orientation and mobility instruction, rehabilitation teaching, or social work.) provide information regarding the types of ongoing

support services and accommodations that should be considered in vocational rehabilitation programs and employment settings.

- H. Reports indicating special equipment or other accommodations and/or behavioral supports needed.
  - I. Indicators of academic achievement, such as transcripts, grades, academic achievement testing, type of diploma being sought, and/or reports of college study skills and readiness training.
  - J. Career assessment information including: Level I, II or III vocational assessment reports, work experience or work study progress reports, career assessment portfolios, mentor or work supervisor evaluations, occupational education assessment reports or career plan folders.
2. If available school records do not contain sufficient information for a counselor to determine eligibility, the counselor may purchase further assessments as may be needed. It is inappropriate to reject a student referral on the basis that a school does not have available the type of evaluative report the counselor wishes to review in making an eligibility determination. If a counselor finds that there are consistent problems with a particular school district making appropriate records available to expedite the eligibility process for student referrals, the counselor should refer the problem to the District Office/Regional Associate Transition Problem-Solving Team for systems improvement considerations. Questions can also be directed to Doris Jamison, Transition Unit, at (518) 474-7566.

## **Responsibilities of Referral Sources**

Responsibilities of referral sources should include, at a minimum, the following:

1. A review, with the individual, of their need for vocational rehabilitation services and the appropriateness of the referral to ACCES-VR . The referral source must obtain the individual's required consent for the release of confidential information and provide evidence of that at referral.
2. Timely and complete submission of referral information as referenced in Sections A and B above.
3. For OASAS and OMH referral sources, referral criteria and information exchange will follow existing statewide agreements or local agreements based on statewide Memoranda of Understanding.

## **Counselor and Consumer Responsibilities**

1. Individuals who are applying for services should make reasonable efforts to provide information that is available to them and necessary for the determination of eligibility (e.g. school records, medical records, etc.). Form Letters should be used to inform the individual about this responsibility. Each form letter identifies a list of information and documentation that is necessary to complete the application process. Staff should only include items that are essential to the eligibility determination RAPPINFO, REFAPPT, RINCOMPL, RINFOFUP, or RSUBMI.
2. At any time that individuals are asked to provide or do provide information of a confidential nature, they should be informed about the confidentiality procedures

that ACCES-VR will follow as per the requirements contained in the ACCES-VR Policy Handbook: 102.00 Confidentiality.

3. The individual who has made prior unsuccessful efforts to achieve an employment outcome through ACCES-VR services, may reapply for services at any time. To the extent possible and appropriate, documentation from previous case records should be used for eligibility determination. These documents can be copied and placed in the newly opened record of services or referenced in a case note in the new record of services. If additional information is required, the individual will be informed of this need and will be expected to cooperate in obtaining available information prior to moving the case into status 02.
4. ACCES-VR will assist the individual in identifying and obtaining available information based on a clear understanding with the individual as to how this will be accomplished.
5. ACCES-VR may determine that additional information that is not available to the individual is required for the determination of eligibility. The individual will be informed of this need and will be expected to cooperate in obtaining this additional information. The case should be placed in status 02 while this additional information is being sought.

### **Telephone Requests for Information or Services**

Telephone contacts from individuals who are interested in applying for services should result in one of the following activities:

1. the individual will be provided with the schedule of orientation sessions that he or she will be expected to attend; or
2. the individual will be provided with an appointment to attend a specific orientation session; or
3. the individual will be provided with an appointment for an intake meeting; or
4. If the individual requests information in advance of the orientation or intake meeting, then that information can be provided either by phone or by providing the individual an information packet with or without the application form. Form Letter REFNEXT should be used as a cover. An individual requesting information must always be afforded the opportunity to speak with staff regarding services if this is requested.

### **Applications Procedures (Status 02)**

1. The applicant must provide a signed request for services, which may be a letter or the standard ACCES-VR application form. An exception can be made where an agreement exists for electronic applications for services that use a secure and unique identifier for the individual. If the individual is unable to write or sign his/her name, a verbal request is sufficient to start the application process. Such verbal request must be documented in the case record.
2. The individual seeking services, or the referring agency must be provided with a request for available information that is necessary to begin the assessment to determine eligibility, such as school records and medical reports. Once that available information is received, the case is opened in status 02. If the individual

reports that requested information is not available, and ACCES-VR is unable to reach an agreement with the individual or referring agency as to further steps that might be taken, the case should be placed into applicant status 02 and assistance provided to the individual in obtaining that information by:

- A. contacting the source of the information directly with a request for existing information including an appropriate signed release form; or
  - B. providing an authorization for assessment services.
3. The individual must be available to participate in the vocational rehabilitation process. Availability to participate is defined as able to attend ACCES-VR orientation, meet with a ACCES-VR representative and able to maintain telephone, written or other agreed upon means of communication with a ACCES-VR counselor. This is to ensure that the individual can participate in the activities associated with eligibility determination, IPE development, periodic progress reviews, and seeking and securing employment before opening the case in status 02.
  4. Once the individual has been placed in applicant Status 02, the counselor must make an eligibility determination within 60 calendar days (as outlined in the ACCES-VR Policy Handbook: Eligibility for Services 202.00 and 202.00P.)

## **Sixty (60) Day Requirement**

### **Purpose**

An eligibility decision is required within 60 calendar days of receipt of a completed application from an individual. A completed application includes a request for services, verbal or written, provision by the applicant of available information necessary to initiate the eligibility determination process and confirmation that the applicant is available to participate in the vocational rehabilitation process. Counselors and/or Counselor Assistants must use their professional judgment, in consultations with the individual, in determining what information is available (e.g. school transcripts, medical records, etc.) that is necessary to initiate the eligibility determination process. Once this information has been received, the application is considered complete, and the case is moved into Status 02. The 60-day eligibility timeframe begins.

### **Procedure**

1. The sixty-day requirement begins when the case is moved into applicant Status 02. An eligibility decision will be made as soon as there is sufficient information for the counselor to determine that the person meets or does not meet the requirements for eligibility.
2. If it becomes evident during the eligibility determination process that the 60-day timeframe will be exceeded, District Office staff should negotiate an extension with the individual. This agreement must be documented in a letter (Form letter: EEXAG) to the individual. This form letter provides notification to the consumer that the eligibility decision cannot be made within the sixty days, proposes a date by which the necessary information will be available and provides the opportunity for the consumer to disagree with the timeframe proposed for the determination of

eligibility. The individual will be informed of his/her right to an administrative review and/or impartial hearing and assistance from the Client Assistance Program.

3. Cases for which an extension has been established and confirmed via Form Letter: EEXAG or EEXDISAG should be placed in status 07; formerly the status for interim eligibility.
4. In the event that the consumer does not agree to an extension and/or requests an impartial hearing, the District Office will continue to provide the services necessary to determine eligibility until the impartial hearing is decided. The case should be placed in status 07 even though the individual has not agreed to the extension.

## **Coding Procedures**

1. As part of the referral and application process, statistical coding must be completed and entered onto the mainframe database.
2. Listed below are the data element requirements to move a case into Status 02, those required prior to leaving Status 02 and at entry into statuses 06, 08 and 10. The data elements may be recorded on VES-04, Application Data Sheet or VES-200, Statistical Data Form or entered directly on the mainframe. When completing statistical coding, if necessary, reference FORM VES-201 for data definitions. A copy of the source document for data entry or a screen-print of the transaction should be placed in the Case Folder.

At entry into status 00

Name  
Address  
Date of Birth  
Sex  
Disability

At entry into Status 02

Name  
Address  
Date of Birth  
Sex  
Referral Disability  
Race  
Hispanic Origin  
Educational Status  
Marital Status  
Referral Source

Prior to leaving status 02 or 07

Significant Disability Determination



At entry into Status 06: Trial Work Experience/Extended Evaluation

Major Disability  
Secondary Disability

At entry into Status 08: Closed Ineligible

Reason for Closure  
Education at Closure  
Work Status at Closure  
Public Support at Closure

Supplemental Security Income - Aged  
Supplemental Security Income - Disabled  
Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TANF)  
General Assistance (Safety Net)  
Social Security Disability Insurance  
Veteran's Disability Insurance  
Other Disability Benefits  
Other Public Support

At entry into Status 10

Social Security Number  
Veteran Status  
Program Codes  
Referral Agent  
SI Status at Referral  
SSDI Status at Referral  
Institution Code at Referral  
Medical Insurance Coverage at Application  
Medical Insurance through Employment  
Monthly Public Support Amount

Public Support at Referral:

Supplemental Security Income - Aged  
Supplemental Security Income - Disabled  
Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TANF)  
General Assistance (Safety Net)  
Social Security Disability Insurance  
Veteran's Disability Insurance  
Other Disability Benefits  
Other Public Support

Previous Closure  
Number of Dependents  
Total Number in Family  
Monthly Family Income  
Weekly Earnings at Referral  
Weekly Hours at Referral  
Work Status at Referral  
Primary Source of Support  
Major Disability  
Secondary Disability  
Medical Insurance Coverage at Application  
Medical Insurance through Employment at Application

### **Voter Registration**

1. Individuals should be made aware that the services that are provided by ACCES-VR are in no way affected by their participation or non-participation in the New York State Voter Registration program.
2. Staff who take applications in a face to face situation must use the regular version of the voter registration form. Once completed by the applicant the voter registration form is forwarded to the site coordinator who will see that it is sent to the County Board of Elections within the prescribed periods.
3. If a consumer declines to participate in the Voter Registration Program, he/she is asked to record the declination by completing the top part of the Board of Elections "NYS Agency-Based Voter Registration Form". It will not be necessary for staff to actively seek the declination information on the Voter Registration Forms that are mailed to individuals.
4. For those individuals receiving a mailed ACCES-VR information packet, if requested, a "mail-in" Voter Registration Form should be inserted in the packet as well as the standard letter, REFNEXT.
5. Persons who participate in a group process leading to the filling out of an application, whether or not they actually apply for ACCES-VR services, will receive the NYS Voter Registration Form as part of the overview for applying for ACCES-VR services. Staff must determine through direct questioning whether assistance is needed for filling out the Voter Registration Form. Once completed, the form is collected and forwarded to the District Office site coordinator for mailing to the County Board of Elections.
6. Whenever a ACCES-VR consumer informs the office of a change of address, the individual is to be mailed or provided a mail-in NYS Voter Registration Form in order that their voter registration can be updated. The standard letter VTRREG can be used for this purpose.
7. If a ACCES-VR applicant refuses to complete the Voter Registration Form for any reason, he/she will be informed that the services they receive from ACCES-VR will not be affected in any way. ACCES-VR staff in each office will develop a procedure to keep the signed declinations in a secure place for 22 months.
8. The District Office Business Manager will indicate on the Board of Elections form "NVRA-03 10/98" provided, the number of Voter Application forms mailed or

handed out that month. The same form will have a line for indicating how many individuals declined to participate the Voter Registration process. Form "NVRA-03 10/98" will be forwarded to District Office Administration by the 10th day of the month following the month for which activity is reported. The Voter Registration Site Coordinator will mail any Voter Registration Forms received in the District Office to the county Voter Registration Board in batches every ten (10) working days.

9. Any questions regarding voter registration should be directed to Mr. Gene Male in Administrative Services (518) 473-1163).