

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Consumer Manual

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1. Introduction

This handbook is designed to provide general information about the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program offered through the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS). We hope this book will help you understand the VR program from application through case closure, so that you will have a successful outcome in your pursuit of employment.

The public VR program is the result of the Rehabilitation Act. This federal law is founded on the belief that all individuals with disabilities can work. Under this law, each state operates a program in partnership with the federal government. The cost is shared by both the state and federal governments. The goal of the program is to help people with significant disabilities to prepare for, find, keep, and advance in good jobs.

- You can be referred to the program by any source in your community or you may contact the program on your own;
- Once you apply you will work mostly with a vocational rehabilitation counselor to determine your eligibility;
- If you are found to be eligible, you and your counselor will work together to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that identifies your job goal and services you will need to achieve that goal;
- Your IPE will spell out the responsibilities for both you and BRS;
- Your IPE can be changed over time, as long as you and your counselor agree to the changes;
- The goal of the BRS program is competitive integrated employment.

. Please feel free to contact any staff member of BRS if you have questions or need any further information about services or policy described in this handbook. You may also check out our website at www.ct.gov/brs.

2. Eligibility-Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)

2b. Eligibility

Once you decide to apply for services with BRS, the next step is to work closely with your counselor to determine your eligibility. **In general, you may be eligible for services if:**

- **You have a significant impairment that interferes with your ability to work; and**
- **You require vocational rehabilitation services to attain or maintain employment.**

If you are receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) your eligibility may be established immediately.

When resources are limited, BRS is required to prioritize services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. This is called Order of Selection. If your disabilities are not found to be “significant” you may not meet priority for services. Staff assisting you with the application process can explain this in more detail.

Sometimes it may be necessary for BRS to arrange for tests or other assessments to determine your eligibility or priority under the Order of Selection. These tests would be given at no cost to you. You are encouraged to be involved in how these assessments are done, including the selection of providers who will perform these evaluations.

BRS assessments may include:

- Collecting information about your history and any records that document your disability;
- Trial Work Experiences;
- Psychological assessment;
- Medical evaluations;
- Talking with you to determine how your disability may impact your employment; and
- Other evaluations that you and your counselor determine are necessary.

Our goal is to determine the status of your eligibility as quickly as possible with the minimum number of tests and paperwork. The law requires this process be completed within 60 days. If it takes longer than 60 days due to insufficient information, we will ask you to sign an agreement to extend the period for eligibility determination.

2c. What Can I Do to Make the BRS Program Work for Me?

You and your counselor are partners and your active participation will help to speed up the process to achieve your goals more quickly. Here is a list of suggestions to make the process successful:

- **Think about your employment plans prior to meeting with your BRS counselor.** What are your likes, dislikes, strengths, and weaknesses? Consider long-term career goals and how you can achieve them.
- **Take responsibility for your program.** You determine your future. Your counselor is there to assist and guide you, but there will be things you need to accomplish for yourself.
- **Keep scheduled appointments.** Missing appointments may delay your progress, if you must cancel please call ahead of time to reschedule.
- **Bring medical and/or educational records requested by your counselor** to better determine your eligibility and create your IPE.
- **Record important information** or ask that it be put in writing for you. Keep your own BRS file with all the papers you receive.
- **Plan ahead** when making employment or educational plans. You may be disappointed if you wait until the last minute before applying for services or contacting your counselor.
- **Keep in touch with your counselor.** You can call your counselor at any time, if they aren't available be sure to leave your name and how you can be reached.
- **Keep watch for any communications from BRS.** BRS may contact you by phone, email or United States Postal Service. Respond to calls and emails, read all the mail sent to you by BRS. If you don't understand any communication sent to you, please reach out for assistance.
- **Ask questions.** The BRS program may be confusing and your counselor can provide answers. For additional advice or assistance, you may call the Client Assistance Program (CAP) at 1-800-842-7303.
- **Share your views** with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The SRC assesses, advises, and recommends policy for BRS regarding the effectiveness of the VR and other supported employment programs. Members of the SRC are appointed by the Governor; they are consumers, family members, service providers, and advocates that meet bi-monthly. You may attend one of the monthly meetings or the BRS public meeting.

3. Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) – Going to Work

3a. Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) Overview

An Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is a written document that describes how vocational rehabilitation (VR) services will help you toward your employment goal. Both you and your counselor will agree to a realistic job goal for you and a plan for how you will reach that goal. Your IPE is based on:

- Previous work experience (if any);
- How your disability impacts your work; and
- Type of job you are interested in.

Your IPE outlines how you will achieve employment with the help of VR services. It will also take into consideration your strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, interests, and informed choices.

3b. How Do I Develop a Meaningful IPE?

Once your eligibility to receive VR services has been determined, you and your counselor will begin to develop your IPE. The goal and services required in the plan are based on your input; it is also based on information that you or others provide regarding your abilities and interests.

Things to consider when deciding on an employment goal:

- Is this a job where there are many opportunities for employment?
- Where are the potential employers located and will transportation be an issue?
- What does career growth look like in this field? What will this job pay, and does that meet your needs?

- Is there flexibility in working conditions?
- What skills and/or training will I need to gain employment in this field?
- What resources will you need to reach your goal?
- If your goal will require a lot of preparation time, can you afford to be unemployed for an extended period of time while you prepare?

BRS will look at a number of factors as you work together to develop your IPE: Is the plan consistent with your strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice?

- Are the services requested essential toward reaching your goal?
- Does the plan have measurable goals to be monitored to ensure a successful outcome?
- Are the time frames realistic toward reaching your goal?
- Have other funding sources been explored, when appropriate?
- Are the sources of payment identified in the plan?
- Is the cost of service reasonable?
- Are treatments or interventions that you need to be successful addressed in the plan?
- Are the services consistent with BRS regulations and policies?

If you need to adjust your IPE at any time contact your counselor immediately to discuss any changes. When changes are agreed to, an amendment to the IPE will be written.

3c. Who Will Pay for the Services I Need?

Every Individualized Plan for Employment is different. Many resources may be used to cover the costs of services under the IPE. Each IPE should carefully spell out who is responsible to pay for what services.

- You will be asked to voluntarily contribute resources toward the cost of your IPE. Examples of how you might contribute resources include paying a vendor for a portion of the cost of services you need or getting some of the services on your own. You are not, however, required to provide a contribution and your plan cannot be held up if you are not able to contribute.
- Before BRS funds can be used, it is required by law to determine if there are other resources (such as other agencies, your health insurance, financial aid for post-secondary education, or employee benefits) that will pay for the services you need.
- BRS may pay for services or goods that are not available from other sources and that are agreed upon in your IPE. These goods and services must be purchased in a way that agrees with state and BRS purchasing policies and terms.

If you have any questions about who is paying for services identified in your IPE, please ask your counselor.

3d. What Will Happen to My Benefits if I go to Work?

If you receive disability cash or medical benefits (such as Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), State Supplement, Medicare and/or Medicaid), you may qualify under rules that would allow you to work and still receive benefits.

A Benefits Specialist (also known as a Community Work Incentive Coordinator or CWIC) at BRS understands how work and earnings will affect your benefits. Simple questions can be answered by phone, though you may need to meet in person with a Benefits Specialist if you have several questions or a complicated situation. There are fact sheets on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), State Supplement, as well as MED-CONNECT at every BRS office.

4. BRS Services (Overview)

The vocational rehabilitation program offers a wide range of services to individuals who are eligible. The plan for services is developed based on the individual needs of each person that BRS serves. Therefore, the services provided to one person may be very different than services provided for another person.

As a general rule, in order for BRS to provide a service:

- 1. You must require the service in order for you to succeed in achieving your employment goal; and**
- 2. The service must be unavailable to you through other resources.**

You are encouraged to ask your counselor or other BRS staff if you have questions about the availability or need for any particular service. The following list includes the types of services that BRS may provide, if needed:

- Evaluation services to determine eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs;
- Counseling, guidance, and information about career and employment decisions;
- Referral to other service providers for services not available through this program;
- Assessment, Work Readiness and Work Attachment Services;
- Employment training and other training services;
- Physical and mental restoration services;
- Expenses for additional costs that occur while participating in a BRS evaluation or an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE);
- Transportation services;
- Personal assistance services may be needed to assist the consumer in performing daily living activities as a result of the disability, which are necessary in order for the individual to achieve the job goal;
- Interpreter or reader services;
- Occupational licenses, tools, equipment, and initial stocks and supplies;
- Self-employment services including technical assistance and consultation for the establishment of small business operations;
- Rehabilitation technology;
- Transition planning from school to work;
- Job coaching and supported employment services;
- Services to family members, if needed for the individual with a disability to achieve the employment goal; and
- Post-employment services to assist individuals to keep their job, to get a new job, or to advance in their job .

4a. Assessment Services

An Assessment is an opportunity for a client to have their skills, strengths and weaknesses evaluated in a real work situation in the community through a Trial Work Experience (TWE). This type of evaluation is valuable in determining how VR Counselor and the client can best approach planning for and obtaining employment. This process begins with CRP connecting a client with an employer willing to “try out” a client at a desirable job in their place of business for a negotiated period. The expectation is that the client performs the same job tasks that they would if they worked for the employer. During an assessment, the client will be paid a minimum hourly wage for their work by the CRP.

4b. Work Readiness Training Services

The Work Readiness Training Program is intended to evaluate and upskill abilities of consumers with disabilities with the goal of enhancing employment opportunities. The services focus on pre-employment training activities to help consumers develop the skills needed to enter the workforce and/or become positioned to realize career advancement. Aging and Disability Services as established a curriculum for the following services that may take place at the local American Job Center, or provided by a Community Rehabilitation Provider:

1. Module A: Pre-Employment
2. Module B: Job Seeking Skills
3. Module C: Informational Interviews
4. Module D: Job Shadowing

4c. Work Attachment Services

Work Attachment is the process of locating and securing a job placement in the competitive labor market for an ADS consumer. Unless otherwise noted by the ADS counselor, when a referral is made for a work attachment, the CRP has the latitude to negotiate any of the three placement services with a prospective employer;

1. Competitive Placement Opportunity
2. Job Placement
3. On the Job Training

4d. Job Coaching and Supported Employment

Job coaching and supported employment should be designed to meet your individual needs for keeping your job. The BRS can set up job coaching is quite flexible. Some people may need more or different kinds of support than others. Some people work better with some job coaches than others (for example, you may feel more comfortable working with a male or female job coach). It is important to let your BRS counselor know if you have specific needs in the amount or type of services that you receive, or if you are having difficulties with your job coach.

- A **job coach** is a person who provides the support you need to keep a job in the community. You may need the job coach only for a limited period of time or you may need support from a job coach on an ongoing basis (which BRS calls “supported employment.”)
- **Supported employment** is a regular job in the community with supports (usually job coaching) to help you keep the job. It is designed for persons who, because of a significant disability, are expected to need supports for as long as they remain employed. (Please note, the law requires that these plans be made before someone starts in supported employment do to the lengthy duration.)

Your BRS counselor will maintain contact with you during your first 90 days on the job or longer, if necessary, to make sure your job is satisfactory. BRS can provide technical assistance to you and your employer to identify ways to modify the job site to improve performance. Additionally, BRS can provide post-employment services that assist you in retaining the job or finding another job in the same or related field.

Details regarding specific Community Rehabilitation provider (CRP) services can also be found in the Department's CRP-Handbook, which is available online at [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/AgingandDisability/BRS/CRP-Handbook-January-2019 .pdf?la=en](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/AgingandDisability/BRS/CRP-Handbook-January-2019.pdf?la=en) .

4e.Education and Training Services

Employment Training

Employment Training is the means by which a person learns the skills needed to do a particular job or type of work. BRS may help, if training is needed for you to achieve the job goal, and if BRS has agreed to help you with this as part of your IPE.

Examples include:

- on-the-job training;
- short-term specific skill training;
- internships;
- vocational/technical school; and
- college training.

Financial Aid for Post-Secondary Education

In order for BRS to determine any possible financial contribution to your post-secondary training, you must be accepted into the training program and apply for financial aid.

By law, BRS may not contribute its funds toward your program until other available resources, as identified by the financial aid office of your school, are applied.

Tips for applying:

- Check with the financial aid office (FAO) of the school where you are applying to find out what the procedure is for that school. Make sure you submit your financial aid forms by the deadline of their financial aid office. You will need to fill out and complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and mail it to the Federal Student Aid Center.
- In about four weeks you will receive your Student Aid Report (SAR) from the Federal Student Aid Center.
- Fill out the student section of the SAR and submit it to the school's FAO and meet with the financial aid officer. Let them know about any special circumstances, costs, or needs you may have. Also, let the financial aid officer know that you are a consumer with BRS and that they can expect to receive a BRS Client-Student Financial Information Exchange Form (VR-21) from your counselor.
- The FAO officer will review all data received and send you an award letter. Review all figures, including the amount of your student/family contribution. If you do not agree with the figures, contact the FAO for reconsideration. Note: BRS does not require you to take out student loans to be considered for financial sponsorship, even when the FAO identifies them as part of your package. If you have defaulted on a student loan in the past it may affect your award and BRS sponsorship.
- Your completed VR-21 is mailed to the BRS counselor by the FAO.
- The contribution BRS will offer toward education expenses will be limited to no more than the costs of attending a similar program in the State Community College system (SCC).
- Your BRS counselor will meet with you to discuss your award package and how BRS may assist in helping to meet the costs of attending school. If you do not agree with the need and resource figures present on the VR-12, you may request a review of the BRS contribution. If you have evidence that you (or your family) are unable to meet the student/family contribution, you should bring this to the attention of your counselor.
- Disability related expenses are looked at separately from general education costs. It will be helpful if you can identify, as much as possible, whatever disability related services you will need and their expected cost.

4f. Transition from School to Work

Transition services represent the set of vocational rehabilitation services available to eligible students or youth with a disability. They are outcome-oriented and promote movement from school to post-school activities.

These services help prepare students with a disability to move from receiving services required under an IPE or 504 Plan to receiving VR Services; and help minimize potential delays in service delivery during the transition from school to employment or independence.

Level Up Services

Level Up services are designed to assist eligible or potentially eligible students with increasing their understanding of themselves and the world of work so they can be better prepared to make educational and employment-based decisions. These services include:

- Job Exploration Counseling
- Work-Based Learning Experiences
- Instruction in Self-Advocacy
- Workplace Readiness Training
- Counseling for Postsecondary Education and Training

The Level Up program helps high school students, between the ages of 16-21, who have an IEP, 504 Plan, or related challenges in the community. ADS Level Up counselors, along with our community partners, can create opportunities for students to learn, work and grow. Students will be advised as additional Pre-Employment Transition Services become available throughout the school year. When students graduate, they can continue with traditional vocational rehabilitation services based on eligibility and will be transferred to an adult services counselor.

5g. Self- Employment Services

Self-employment is a type of work where you own and operate your own business. It may be a business that you operate out of your home. It may also be called a small business enterprise or a micro-business enterprise. If your employment goal is to be self-employed:

- You must develop a business plan, and it must be approved by the Connecticut Small Business Development Center (CSBDC) as an economically viable proposal. An alternate small business resource acceptable to both you and your counselor may be used instead of the CSBDC.
- Prior to providing services under an IPE with a goal of self-employment, BRS must agree to both the goal and the business plan. It will be important for you and your counselor to discuss how you will decide what defines a successful business.
- BRS generally limits its contribution toward establishing a small business (excluding training costs and disability-related vehicle and/or work site modifications) to \$10,000 for businesses that are expected to have a net income at or above the amount recognized by the Social Security Administration as substantial gainful activity (SGA) after two years in operation. For those businesses that are expected to have a lower income, the limit is \$5,000. Check with your counselor to verify the SGA amount as it may change each year.
- You will be required to make a contribution toward the business, valued at 10% of BRS' assistance. Your contribution may be in cash, in-kind labor, and/or materials.
- Self-employment services provided by BRS are limited to start-up services and goods. Examples of start-up services might include business consultants, bookkeeping, advertising, initial stock, insurance, permits, fees, equipment, supplies, rent, utilities, transportation, telephone, and postage.
- Your counselor will visit the business and/or be in contact with you to see how the business is going. Before BRS closes your case with the agency, you and your counselor will need to decide whether you still agree that the business is or will be successful.
- If you need additional assistance with your business, the Small Business Development Counseling Center offers ongoing counseling and workshops. *For more information, call toll free: 855-428-7232.*

5h. Post-Employment Services

Post-employment services may be provided to you after your case has been closed to help you retain or advance in your current job or find another job in the same or related field. Usually services are offered if you have a problem related to your disability that affects your work.

Am I Eligible for Post-Employment Services?

If you have received services from BRS and your case has been closed recently because you were working, you might be eligible. If you find you are having trouble with your job, are unable to advance in your job, or have lost your job, and you think it is because of your disability, you should contact your BRS counselor to inquire about post-employment services.

Will I have to Go Through Exams or Tests Again?

In general, you will not have to redo exams or tests if you are being considered for post-employment services. You are still considered eligible to receive services from BRS based on the information already in your case record. That information can usually be used to determine what services you need.

However, if your disability has changed, or if your circumstances and job goals have significantly changed, you may need to reapply for services. At that time additional exams or tests may be necessary.

5. Other BRS Services

5a. Rehabilitation Technology

Rehabilitation Technology is the evaluation and use of devices that assist individuals with disabilities to maintain or improve their ability to function. The term also includes any services needed to test, try, or learn the use of the devices. In vocational rehabilitation (VR), rehabilitation technology is used for the purpose of assisting individuals to work more independently or to participate more independently in an IPE leading to competitive employment.

There are many different kinds of technology devices, for example:

- A wide gripped pencil;
- A telephone with large buttons;
- A calculator with large keys;
- A writing guide for a sheet of paper;
- A magnifier;
- An adapted keyboard;
- Computers with voice recognition software;
- Power wheelchair or scooter;
- Communication devices;
- Prosthetic and/or orthotic devices (artificial limbs, braces); and
- Vehicle modifications.

Your BRS counselor will work with you to determine whether you need any rehabilitation technology devices or services. An evaluation by a specialist, from outside BRS, may be provided to help you in learning what technology is available to you and how it may improve your accessibility.

What is the process to get rehabilitation technology?

- In your IPE, you and your counselor agree that you need technology. If you need a simple device (pencil, calculator, etc.), your counselor may, in most cases, just buy it quickly and easily.

- When you and your counselor decide that you need a rehabilitation technology consultation, your counselor will contact the BRS consultant for a referral to a technology specialist.
- During the evaluation with the specialist, they will talk with you about your specific needs and employment goals and may ask you to do some tasks to determine your level of functioning.
- After the evaluation, the specialist will write a report to your counselor describing their findings and recommendations.
- Your counselor will share the report with you and once you agree with the assessment the arrangements will be made to purchase the device or arrange for the service. The length of time it will take to receive the equipment depends on the type of technology needed, customized devices will take more time.
- BRS will try to accommodate your preferences and choices as much as possible. If you have a preferred product or vendor you'd like to try, tell your counselor.
- In some instances, you may need training to learn how to use the equipment. You and your counselor can arrange for you to learn how to use the device once you receive the equipment.

5b. Home and Workplace Modifications

BRS may provide minor home modifications to allow you to safely enter and exit the home and meet functional employment needs. Modifications cannot cost more than \$10,000. In the case of the workplace, the modifications enable the individual to perform or significantly increase independence in the job functions, where the employer is not required to provide the modifications under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Minor home or workplace modifications will only be provided to the extent necessary for successful completion of the individual's IPE. Examples of such services may include ramps, grab bars or lifts.

After discussing home modification services with your counselor, he/she will visit your home or workplace to evaluate your request and discuss options. If options other than a home modification appear more appropriate, your counselor will arrange the other options which may include a referral for an Occupational/Physical Therapy evaluation and/or Assistive Technology evaluation.

If a home modification appears to be the most appropriate action:

- Your counselor will request that an architect be assigned. The architect will meet you and your counselor at your home to discuss the issue(s) and possible solutions. The architect will submit an estimate based on the decided action.
- BRS will explore all options before agreeing to home modifications but can fund up to \$10,000 for minor modifications.

- The Regional Director must approve estimates and drafts of any proposed work if the home modification is warranted.
- If your request moves forward based on need to fulfill your IPE and the BRS' standard for reasonableness, you (the property owner) will need to sign a consent to authorize BRS to make the needed modifications.
- BRS will request competitive bids from qualified contractors. You may provide the names of contractors whom you would like to give an opportunity to bid. It takes about four weeks to close the bidding process. Generally, the lowest bidder is awarded the contract.
- For most jobs, the contractor will need to secure a permit from the building inspector in your town. The contractor will work directly with you to schedule and perform the specified work. The contractor is also responsible for obtaining an inspection by the town/city building inspector. Once the work is complete, you, your counselor, and the architect will inspect the work to make sure it was done according to the plans. You will be asked to sign a copy of the bill, agreeing that the work is correct, before BRS will pay the contractor. All work is guaranteed for one year after completion, you are responsible for maintenance after that.
- If the Regional Director denies a request, estimate, or plan, the counselor will review other options with you and give you information about the Client Assistance Program (CAP) if you wish to appeal the decision.

Obtaining a home modification is a very detailed process that will require your full involvement. If home or workplace modifications are a part of your IPE, you will receive a copy of the BRS Policy Manual legal requirements and guidance detailing the Home Modifications process that you may review with your counselor.

5c. Vehicle Modifications

Vehicle modifications are any mechanical or structural changes to a passenger car or other motor vehicle that will permit an individual with a disability to safely drive or ride as a passenger, for the purpose of employment. Generally, modifications may be considered as part of your IPE when accessible public transportation or other means are unavailable.

- The vehicle modification process through BRS is complex and involves an investment of time and money for you and BRS. Your BRS counselor oversees and expedites the process and responds to questions from both you and the vendor doing the modification. Additionally, your counselor also coordinates with the driver training consultant, the driver rehabilitation specialist, and other qualified consultants, as necessary, to review, prescribe, approve, and evaluate your vehicle modification. You can request a copy of BRS policies and procedures from your counselor if it is not provided to you.

- All **eligible individuals**, identified to require Vehicle Modification Services must be referred to Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) for required DMV medical clearance and to verify existing license and/or permit status. DMV forms must be submitted together; DMV Medical Form P-142M and DMV Eye Care Report P-142OP
- Your counselor may also request your cooperation in undergoing evaluation and testing, as necessary, to determine your ability to drive and the need for special equipment and modification.
- If you are not the owner of the vehicle to be modified, you will need to obtain written permission to use the modified vehicle for at least five years.
- The vehicle modification prescription will be sent to approved vendors (certified through the National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association (NMEDA) Quality Assurance Program) for competitive bidding. It usually takes about 3 weeks to complete the bidding process. Generally, the lowest qualified bidder will be awarded the contract; if you would like a different qualified vendor you are responsible for paying the difference in cost.
- After the bid has been awarded, you may proceed to buy your vehicle. Most consumers buy a vehicle through the vehicle modification vendor. These vendors have new car dealer and used car dealer licenses through the DMV.
- The vendor who is awarded the job will contact you to arrange to pick up your vehicle. The amount of time required to complete the job depends upon its complexity and the company's schedule. You will be expected at least once to the vendor's location for a "fitting" to ensure the equipment best meets your needs.
- Upon completion of your vehicle modification, you must contact the Driver Training Unit (DTU) to advise them of your availability for training and/or licensing.
- The vehicle owner is responsible to maintain and insure the vehicle and the modifications. Equipment installed or modified by the vendor has a one-year warranty. During the first 90 days of warranty coverage, minor adjustments and preventative maintenance can be performed by the vendor at no cost.

5d. Restoration Services

Restoration services includes any form of recognized treatment for mental or physical impairments where the service is expected to help the individual in removing or adjusting to barriers to an employment outcome. Restoration services provided by BRS must, within a reasonable period of time, be expected to correct or modify substantially an impairment which constitutes a substantial impediment to employment. Under your IPE, restoration services may be provided if you need them in order to achieve your employment goal and if the treatment is not available to you through other resources such as your private insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, or through the state mental health and addition system.

The following are examples of restoration services that might be provided if you and your counselor agree they are required for you to attain your employment goal:

- Physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, or corrective surgery;
- Psychotherapy, cognitive training, or behavioral treatment;
- Prosthetic and orthotic devices;
- Mobility devices, communication devices, eyeglasses, or hearing aids;
- Necessary hospitalization in connection with surgery or treatment; and/or

Special services for individuals with end-stage renal disease.

Restoration services provided by BRS should be noted in your IPE, and evaluation of progress should be made at least every 90 days.

6. What Do I Do if I Disagree with BRS? – The Appeals Process

You have the right to appeal any decision about your case at any time. BRS encourages you, the consumer, to speak up if you disagree with a decision made by BRS.

Examples of issues you can appeal:

- Your eligibility for services;
- Your Order of Selection category;
- The type of training program;
- The availability of services;
- Assistive technology that you need;
- Your level of maintenance; and/or
- The closing of your case.

BRS encourages you and BRS staff to try and work out problems informally whenever possible. You and your BRS counselor should consult with a supervisor, a Regional Director, or a Central Office staff person when there is a disagreement about services or other program concerns.

There are a few different methods for you to appeal a decision:

- Informal Review;
- Mediation; and
- Formal Review/Administrative Hearing.

7a. Informal Review

The Informal Review is a meeting with you and a member(s) of the staff of BRS (usually your counselor, sometimes their supervisor, and usually the BRS Regional Director for your area). You will explain your request to change a BRS decision, and why you think BRS should change the decision.

- You have 30 days to make your request for an Informal Review in writing to the Regional Director of the Regional BRS office where you receive services;
- The Informal Review must be scheduled in a timely manner (usually within 2-3 weeks);
- If you do not appear at the scheduled Informal Review, you waive your right to an Informal Review;
- You may contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP) to help you prepare;
- You may bring additional evidence (typically more information from your point of view, like doctor's reports, etc.) to support your argument;
- Information in your case file must be made available to you or your representative;
- Unless you make the request, until the person doing the Review makes their decision, BRS cannot terminate, reduce, or suspend services unless they have been falsely obtained;
- After the Informal Review, the Regional Director will send the written decision to you in a timely manner (usually within 2-3 weeks);
- If the decision is not in your favor, you may then request a Formal Hearing, also known as an Administrative Hearing.

7b. Mediation

Mediation is a process used to come to an agreement or compromise when two parties disagree. If you request mediation it cannot take place unless BRS agrees to enter mediation with you. It is voluntary for you, and for BRS. A neutral person, the "mediator," is selected from a list of mediators by agreement between you and BRS. The mediator meets with you and BRS and tries to spell out a written agreement to settle the disagreement.

- You have 30 days to make your request for mediation, in writing, to the Regional Director of the BRS Regional office where you receive services;
- The mediator does not "make a decision" and send it out in writing, they help you and BRS make an agreement together which is then written and signed by both parties;
- You may contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP) to help you prepare;
- You may bring additional evidence (typically more information from your point of view, like a doctor's report, etc.) to help your case;
- You should come prepared to compromise with BRS;
- Information in your case file must be made available to you or your representative;
- Unless you make the request, until the person doing the Review makes their decision, BRS cannot terminate, reduce, or suspend services unless they have been falsely obtained;
- BRS may deny the request for mediation in cases where it is not likely that mediation will settle the disagreement;
- BRS is not bound by the terms in the mediation agreement if the issues resolved in mediation are later appealed in an Administrative Hearing;

- At any point in the mediation process, either party or the mediator may decide to stop the mediation; if this occurs, either party may person a Formal Hearing, also known as an Administrative Hearing.

7c. Formal Review/Administrative Hearing

An Administrative Hearing is a formal, legal procedure. A “court reporter” will attend to keep a formal record of the Hearing. The Hearing is run by an impartial Hearing Officer, who must make a decision that is based on the requirements in:

- The State Plan for BRS,
- The Federal Rehabilitation Act, and Federal Regulations, and
- The State statutes, regulations, and policy governing the BRS program.

In an Administrative Hearing, you will be given the opportunity to present additional evidence, information, and witnesses to the impartial Hearing Officer. You also have the right to representation by legal counsel (lawyer), or other advocate of your choice, though any fees are your responsibility. You should know that BRS will be represented by a lawyer from the Attorney General’s office of the State of Connecticut.

- You have 30 days to make your request, in writing, to the BRS Director at the BRS administrative office in Hartford;
- Your 30-day limit starts on the date of notification of a BRS decision you disagree with (including decisions made in Mediation and Informal Reviews);
- You may request representation from the Client Advocacy Program (CAP), they may decide they are unable to represent you based on the nature of your disagreement with BRS;
- You may hire a lawyer to represent you, you are responsible for costs;
- BRS Central Office will schedule the hearing, usually at the BRS office where you receive services;
- Information in your file must be made available to you or your representative;
- The Hearing Officer will provide a written decision, containing a full report of their findings and reasons for their decision, no less than 30 days after your hearing;
- Either you or BRS may request a review by the Commissioner of the Department of Aging and Disability Services, no more than 20 days after receipt of the Hearing Officer’s decision; and
- Either you or BRS may appeal the Commissioner’s decision (or Hearing Officer’s decision if there was no review by the Commissioner) to the state or federal court.

8. Appendix

8a. BRS Local Branch Office Contact Information

Northern Region

Location	Phone	Address
Windsor Office	(860)697-3550	184 Windsor Avenue Windsor, CT 06095
Danielson	(860)455-1617	562 Westcott Road Danielson, CT 06239
East Hartford	(959)200-4400	893 Main Street Suite 304 East Hartford, CT 06108
Manchester	(860)674-5960	699 East Middle Turnpike Manchester, CT 06040
New Britain	(860)612-3569	30 Christian Lane New Britain, CT 06051
Willimantic	(860)455-1606	1320 Main Street Willimantic, CT 06226

Southern Region

Location	Phone	Address
Middletown	(860)740-1080	442 Smith Street Middletown, CT 06457
New Haven	(203)974-3000	370 James Street Suite 306 New Haven, CT 06513
Uncasville/Montville	(860)848-5950	601 Norwich New London TPKE, Suite 1 Uncasville, CT 06382

Western Region

Location	Phone	Address
Bridgeport	(203)683-0500	1057 Broad Street Bridgeport, CT 06604
Danbury	(203)702-0152	342 Main Street Danbury, CT 06810
Stamford	(203)635-1939	1642 Bedford Street Stamford, CT 06905
Torrington	(860)294-0013	30 Peck Road, Building 1, Suite 1102 Torrington, CT 06790
Waterbury	(203)578-4550	249 Thomaston Avenue Waterbury, CT 06702

8c. State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

What is the SRC?

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is an important partner with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS). The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, mandates how employment services for people with disabilities are administered through the Title I – Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Title IV – Supported Employment Programs. This act requires each designated state unit (BRS in Connecticut) to work closely with its SRC in conducting its needs assessments, evaluations, and in developing the State Plan, strategic plans, reports, and state goals and priorities.

Mission

The SRC provides assessment, advice, and recommendations to BRS and others regarding coordination and effectiveness of programs and strategies which promote community-based competitive employment for persons with disabilities.

Goals

The SRC will:

- Assess the effectiveness and delivery of vocational services provided by BRS to individuals with disabilities;
- Strive to improve the coordination of vocational services among BRS, the state agencies, and public and private entities for the benefit of consumers of BRS; and
- Make recommendations to the Governor, BRS, and others for developing and improving strategies for the employment and vocational services for individuals with disabilities.

Membership

The SRC is comprised of a variety of people including consumers, family members, advocates, business leaders, community representatives, and professionals who support BRS endeavors. Many of the members have a disability; these Governor-appointed SRC members serve as the voice of consumers to assist BRS plans and implement VR services. Any individual willing to service in this capacity may seek an appointment to become a part of the SRC. Members are appointed to a three-year term following an application process; they may be appointed to a second three-year term.

Per the Rehab Act, the SRC needs to have specific representatives from the following groups:

- At least one representative of:
 - The Statewide Independent Living Council,
 - The Parent Training and Information Center,
 - The Client Assistance Program (CAP),
 - A qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor,
 - Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP),
 - The State Education Department,
 - The State Workforce Investment Board, and
 - Section 121 (VR for Native Americans);
- Four representatives of business, industry, and labor;
- Representatives of disability advocacy groups representing physical, cognitive, sensory, and mental disabilities and individuals who have difficulty representing themselves; and
- Current or former applicants or recipients of VR services.

Meetings

The SRC rotates meetings around the state six times per year. Members are provided with accommodations for meetings and are reimbursed for travel expenses to and from meetings and other SRC activities. When needed, expenses for the use of personal care attendants that enable member participation in the meetings may also be reimbursed.

Members are asked to join at least one subcommittee that will meet as needed to achieve committee goals. SRC members are also required to attend at least one public meeting per year and are invited to the BRS Annual Meeting. They may attend other BRS programs or activities as they become available.

Recruitment of New Members

The SRC always seeks new members who have a strong interest in the VR program and/or employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Having the time and willingness to do the work is essential. If you are interested in becoming a member, ask your counselor or contact the SRC Liaison.

8c. Forms/Worksheets

- i. Evaluation Form**
- ii. Career Exploration Form**
- iii. Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) Worksheet**