Vocational Rehabilitation

For Veterans and Servicemembers
You may receive Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) services to help with job training, employment accommodations, resume development, and job seeking skills coaching. Other services may be provided to assist Veterans in starting their own businesses or independent living services for those who are severely disabled and unable to work in traditional employment. Tab to learn more and apply for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment services.

VA's Education and Career Counseling program is a great opportunity for Veterans and Servicemembers to get personalized counseling and support to help guide their career paths, ensure the most effective use of their VA benefits, and achieve their goals.

Learn more and apply for education and career counseling

Eligibility and Entitlement

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

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

Who is Eligible for VR&E Services?

Active Duty Servicemembers are eligible if they:

- Expect to receive an honorable or other than dishonorable discharge upon separation from active duty
- Obtain a memorandum rating of 20% or more from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and
- Apply for VR&E services
Veterans are eligible if they:
- Have received a discharge that is other than dishonorable
- Have a service-connected disability rating of at least 10% from VA
- Apply for VR&E services

Basic Period of Eligibility
The basic period of eligibility ends 12 years from the date of notification of one of the following:
- Date of separation from active military service, or
- Date the Veteran was first notified by VA of a service-connected disability rating.

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

What Happens after Eligibility is Established?
The Veteran is scheduled to meet with a VRC for a comprehensive evaluation to determine if he/she is entitled for services. A comprehensive evaluation includes:
- An assessment of the Veteran's interests, aptitudes, and abilities
- An assessment of whether service connected disabilities impair the Veteran's ability to find and/or hold a job using the occupational skills he or she has already developed
- Vocational exploration and goal development leading to employment and/or maximum independence in the Veteran's daily living at home and in the community

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

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

What Happens after the Entitlement Determination is Made?
The Veteran and VRC work together to:
- Determine transferable skills, aptitudes, and interests
- Identify viable employment and/or independent living services options
• Explore labor market and wage information
• Identify physical demands and other job characteristics
• Explore vocational options to identify a suitable employment goal
• Select a VR&E program track leading to an employment or independent living goal
• Investigate training requirements
• Identify resources needed to achieve rehabilitation
• Develop an individualized rehabilitation plan to achieve the identified employment or independent living goals

What is a Rehabilitation Plan?
A rehabilitation plan is an individualized, written plan of services, which outlines the resources and criteria that will be used to achieve employment or independent living goals. The plan is an agreement that is signed by the Veteran and the VRC and is updated as needed to assist the Veteran to achieve his/her goals.

Depending on their circumstances, Veterans will work with their VRC to select one of the following five tracks of services (see definitions for more detail):

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

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

How can I get paid the Post-9/11 GI Bill rate for my Vocational Rehabilitation program?
A Veteran participating in the VR&E Program who qualifies for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits can elect to receive the GI Bill rate of pay instead of the regular Chapter 31 subsistence allowance. In most cases, the GI Bill rate is higher than the regular Chapter 31 rate of pay. To elect the GI Bill rate, the Veteran must have remaining eligibility for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and must formally choose (or “elect”) the GI Bill rate. Your VRC can help you with election. Veterans participating in the VR&E Program who elect the Post-9/11 rate are paid at the 100% rate level for their school and training time, even if their Post-9/11 GI Bill eligibility is less than 100%. Additional benefits are also available through the VR&E Program, such as payment of all required books, fees and supplies as well as other supportive services.
For Family Members
If you support a Veteran or Servicemember with a service-connected disability, who faces difficult employment challenges, there may be little left in the household budget for your higher education and career advancement. VA may offer assistance to help you assess your career goals and abilities, find your next job, further your education and skills, and identify places where you can get job training.

VA may extend vocational counseling and support to family members on topics including:

- Education and Career Counseling
- Readjustment Counseling
- Career Assessments
- Benefits for Children with Disabilities (Chapter 18)
- Dependent Educational Assistance (Chapter 35)
- Choosing a School

For Employers
Veterans leave military service with a wealth of transferable skills and professional experiences. Salary subsidies, assistive technology, non-paid work experiences, and special employer incentives may be available from VA to help you hire those who have served. Explore what VA offers to make hiring or rehiring a Veteran with a service-connected disability that much easier.

VA created a Veterans Employment Toolkit for employers. This toolkit provides a variety of outside resources for employers, managers or supervisors, and human resource professionals, including information about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). It also includes a link to Department of Labor's America's Heroes at Work site, which offers on-line trainings, webcasts, and presentations for employers and a Hiring Veterans Toolkit as well as a TBI, PTSD and Employment Training Tool.

https://www.va.gov/vetsinworkplace/resources.asp

Find more information for employers.

How to Apply
Eligible Veterans and Servicemembers may apply for either Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment benefits or for Education/Career Counseling on-line through eBenefits. It's simple to apply. Just follow these steps:

- Log in to your eBenefits account
- Select "Additional Benefits" from your Dashboard
- Select "Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program" - be sure to read the program information and to update your contact information - and apply for either the "Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program" or "Education/Career Counseling"
• If it is determined that you are eligible, you will be invited to attend an orientation session, in-person, at the nearest VA Regional Office
• Servicemembers who have a disability that began or became worse during active duty and who have not yet received a service-connected disability (SCD) rating do not need to wait to apply. See VA Form 28-0588 for further instructions

For Servicemembers: Ill or injured Servicemembers who have not yet received a SCD rating do not need to wait to apply. Servicemembers expecting a discharge that is other than dishonorable who possess a VA memorandum or Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) rating of 20 percent or more—as well as Servicemembers currently going through a Physical Evaluation Board—may be eligible to receive VR&E services.

Subsistence Allowance Rates
In some cases, Veterans participating in the VR&E program may receive a subsistence allowance while they pursue an educational or training program in preparation for a future career. The subsistence allowance is paid each month, and is based on the rate of attendance in a training program (full time, three quarter time, or half time), the number of dependents, and the type of training. If a Veteran qualifies for the Post-9/11 GI Bill he/she may be eligible to receive the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) rate for subsistence.

Download the current subsistence allowance rates (in effect as of October 1, 2017)

Standard Ch31 Subsistence Allowance Rates effective 10/1/2017

• MS Word Version
• PDF Version

Post-9/11 Ch31 Subsistence Allowance Rate Information (effective January 1st each calendar year)

• MS Word Version
• PDF Version

Veteran Employment Tracks
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC) and Employment Coordinators (EC) are ready to help Veterans and Servicemembers who have service-connected disabilities and an employment barrier/handicap find suitable careers. Your VRC will provide vocational counseling, refer you to appropriate opportunities and services specific to your needs, and help you reach your employment goals. If you are entitled to Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) benefits and services, you will work with a VRC to develop a personalized rehabilitation plan following one of five tracks:
Reemployment
When possible, VR&E helps Veterans and Servicemembers return to work with a former employer by supporting the employer’s efforts to provide accommodations that enable the Veteran to continue along the same or similar career path.

Rapid Access to Employment
VR&E helps Veterans and Servicemembers who are ready to enter the workforce, find, apply for, and secure suitable jobs. VA may provide professional job placement assistance, job accommodations, and other specialized support.

Self-employment
Self-employment can be fulfilling and may offer the flexibility a Veteran with service-connected disabilities needs. VR&E may aid Veterans, who have limited access to traditional employment and have the skill and interest to start a business, by helping to analyze the proposed business plan and providing training on how to market and operate a small business.

Employment Through Long-Term Services
For Veterans and Servicemembers who require additional skills or training to find competitive, suitable employment, VR&E will provide assistance, which may include education benefits, on-the-job training, work study, apprenticeships, or other job preparation programs to help them to obtain appropriate employment.

Independent Living
Some Veterans and Servicemembers may be unable to currently return to work, but with assistance from VR&E, they can lead a more independent life. VA helps them with access to community-based support services, the use of assistive technologies and accommodations, and independent living skills training.

VR&E Longitudinal Study
In 2008, Congress passed the Veterans’ Benefits Improvement Act (P.L. 110-389) to improve and enhance compensation and pension, housing, labor and education, and insurance benefits for Veterans. Section 334 of this law requires VA to conduct a 20-year longitudinal study of the outcomes of individuals who apply for VR&E services and begin rehabilitation plans in fiscal years (FY) 2010, 2012, and 2014.

The primary objective of the longitudinal study of the VR&E program is to determine the long-term post-program outcomes associated with Veterans who establish and participate in a plan of services. Section 334 requires VA to submit annual reports of findings during the study time period to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives. The annual reports detail the demographic and program characteristics of the three cohorts in the study and assess each cohort’s outcomes-to-date.
Historical VR&E Longitudinal Studies to date:

- VR&E 2015 Longitudinal Study

Find a USDVA Facility
Use the facility locator or call 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

Contact Your County Veteran Service Office (CVSO)
The County Veterans Service Offices (CVSO) are locally-funded agencies established to assist Veterans and their families in obtaining benefits and services accrued through military service. These County Veteran Service Offices promote the interest and welfare of Veterans, their dependents, and their survivors by enhancing their quality of life through counseling, education, benefits assistance, and advocacy. They connect Veterans to their benefits by assisting in their interactions with the USDVA.

- Visit the CalVet website for more information, OR
- Find the CVSO closest to you, OR

CalVet strongly recommends you to work with the CVSO nearest you. Your CVSO can guide you through the benefits and services available as well as help connect you with other local resources.

eBenefits
Apply for and manage compensation, pension, housing, education and training, healthcare, insurance, and burial benefits through www.ebenefits.va.gov.

Questions/Comments
Email us at CalTAP@calvet.ca.gov

Source:
https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/index.asp