

Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

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Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Harrisburg District Office

To assist Pennsylvanians with
disabilities
to secure, maintain, and advance in
employment and independence.

Overview: Agency Organization



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (CWOPA)

Department of Labor and Industry (L&I)

Bureau of Vocational
Rehabilitation Services
(BVRs)

15 District Offices

Bureau of Blindness
and Visual Services
(BBVS)

6 District Offices
(Located with BVRs)

Hiram G. Andrews
Center (HGAC)

Johnstown, PA



Bureau of Central
Operations

Harrisburg, PA

OVR District Offices (Map)



-  Office of Vocational Rehabilitation District Office
-  Office of Vocational Rehabilitation District Office with Blind and Visual Services

-  Hiram G. Andrews Center
-  Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Central Office

OVR Process

- ✓ Complete District Office Referral & submit to liaison.
- ✓ Initial Intake (application completed at this time)
- ✓ Eligibility Determination
- ✓ Order of Selection
- ✓ Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)
- ✓ Service Provision
- ✓ Goal Achievement
- ✓ Successful Closure



In order to be determined eligible for OVR services, you must meet the following criteria:

- You have a disability that is a physical, mental, or emotional impairment which results in substantial impediment to employment, and you can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from services provided; and
- Vocational rehabilitation services are required for you to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in or regain employment.

- If a vocational rehabilitation agency is **unable to serve all eligible individuals**, that state must put an OOS into place.
- In an OOS, **individuals with the most significant disabilities must be selected first** for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.
- An OOS is meant **to assess and triage an individual's needs** and then **prioritize services** based upon their level of need.

- An OOS must be applied at the **statewide** level.
- An OOS applies to the state's **Vocational Rehabilitation program** only.
- Specialized services offered by the Bureau of Blindness & Visual Services (BBVS) under the **Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB), Specialized Services – Child/Adult, or Business Enterprise Program (BEP)** are **not impacted** by an OOS.

PA OVR's OOS is divided into three (3) priority categories:

1. Individual with the Most Significant Disability (**MSD**)
2. Individual with Significant Disability (**SD**)
3. Individual with Non-Significant Disability (**NSD**)

*NOTE: we are targeting July 2025 for name and definition changes, which will change the name of the 3rd category to *Individual with a Disability (D)*.

- Although impediments to employment (*eligibility*) and serious limitations in functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome (*OOS*) are very closely related, they are separate determinations.
- An individual could have an impediment to employment and meet all other basic eligibility criteria, but their impairment may not be so significant that it creates serious limitations in multiple functional capacity areas to the point they require multiple services for an extended period of time.

Effective Date April 1, 2025 - OVR will close the SD and NSD categories.

- Any customer determined eligible after this date with an OOS determination putting them into the SD or NSD categories will be put on a waiting list for services
- Any customer who has an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) as of this date will not be impacted. Services for these individuals will continue.

Ensuring continuity of Pre-ETS during an OOS

- **No Disruptions for Students with Disabilities:**

- Students (including Potentially Eligible students) who started Pre-ETS **prior to being placed into an OOS category** must continue to receive these services, as they are critical for transitioning to post-secondary education and employment. They can continue to receive any of the 5 Required Pre-ETS.

- **Limitations of OOS**

- Other VR services cannot be provided to students in closed OOS categories.

Background: Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA)

- Signed by President Obama on July 22, 2014
- Replaces the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA)
- Amends the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Purpose: WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy

❖ WIOA made a large impact in many areas, one of which is the provision of transition services for youth with disabilities.

For more information about WIOA visit the U.S. DOL website:
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa/about>

Purpose: to increase the employment rate of students with disabilities in the state of Pennsylvania.

- Pre-Employment Transition Services are preparatory services for students with disabilities to identify career interests, practice and improve work skills, and explore postsecondary training opportunities at an earlier age to maximize their potential to enter competitive, integrated employment.
- 15% of VR Budget must be allocated to Pre-Employment Transition Services

❖ Commonly referred to as Pre-ETS

Pre-ETS Eligibility Requirements

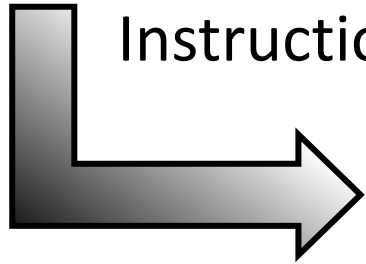


A student with a disability is an individual with a disability in a secondary, postsecondary, or other recognized education program who:

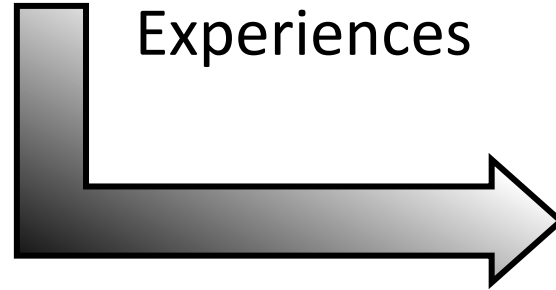
- is at least 14 years of age
- is not older than 21 years of age
- is eligible for, and receiving, special education or related services under IDEA
- is an individual with a disability, for purposes of section 504

OVR's Continuum of Pre-ETS

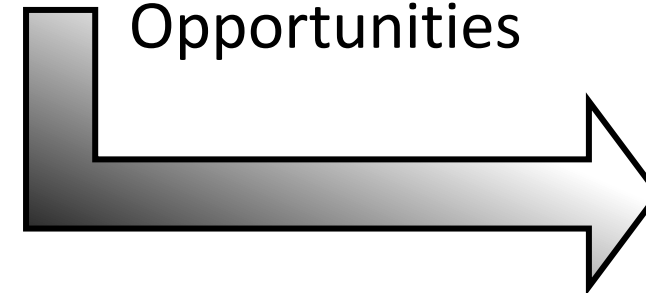
Experiential Learning &
Instruction



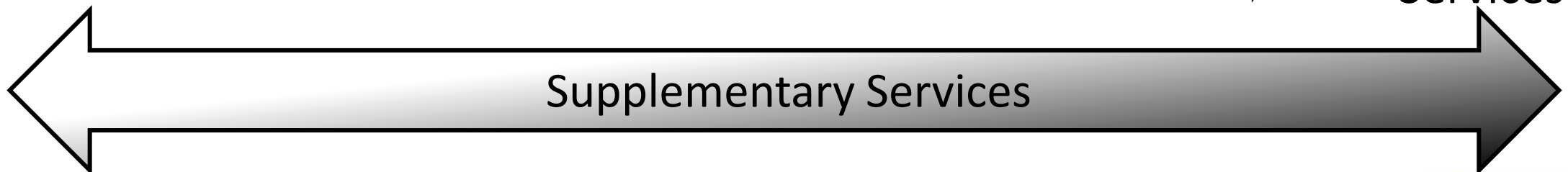
Paid Work Based Learning
Experiences



Enhanced Exploration
Opportunities



OVR's Vocational
Rehabilitation
Services



5 Required Pre-ETS Activities:

1. Self-Advocacy Instruction

2. Workplace Readiness Training

3. Job Exploration Counseling

4. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs

5. Work Based Learning

Offered in individual and group format:

- **Group Pre-ETS**
 - Typically facilitated through the school via the school profile
 - The school profile determines transition needs of the school to ensure that OVR is supplementing not supplanting transition services
 - Can be delivered via internal OVR staff or an external provider
 - Eligible OR potentially eligible students may participate (i.e. do not need an open case in order to participate)
- **Individual Pre-ETS**
 - Must have an open case (i.e. have completed a pre-application and initial intake)
 - Can be delivered via internal OVR staff or an external provider

Pre-ETS Programming Varies per District Office.

HDO Pre-ETS (cost-related, provider provided):

- Job Shadows
- Paid Work Experience
- Community Work Instruction (CWI)
- MY Work

HDO Pre-ETS (non-cost, ERC/VRC provided)

- Early Reach Group Services
- Pre-ETS Counseling and Guidance
- Counseling on Post-Secondary Training
- OVR staff led Group Job Shadows

OVR is **re-prioritizing Pre-ETS** to serve as many students as possible with the funding that is available. Our **funding has normalized** because of investing all surplus monies into customers and programs. PA OVR was unexpectedly **flat-funded** by Congress, even though the program is anticipating increased operating costs for the next few years.

- Before referring for a paid work-based learning experience, OVR staff must assess the need for preliminary services in the continuum such as workplace readiness training or self-advocacy instruction.
- Most students should begin with Group Instruction/Individual Counseling on Required Services or Experiential Learning and Instruction Services.
- Services are not to be repeated. Students may engage in any of the Pre-ETS while they are eligible for services; however, each subsequent service must expand on students' employment skills (new site, more complex task, longer shifts, etc.).

Cost for OVR Services



- It does not cost anything to apply for OVR services.
- There is no cost associated with diagnostic services, vocational evaluation, vocational counseling & guidance, or job placement assistance.
- Depending on income, there may be a participant contribution for cost services.
- A Financial Needs Test will be completed prior to the provision of any cost service to identify what, if any contribution would be expected.
- Individuals receiving Social Security benefits based on their own disability are exempt from the Financial Needs Test and will not have a contribution for cost services.
- **OVR cannot pay for services that have already occurred without prior written authorization from OVR.**

Important Note: Students must want to participate.

All Individual Pre-ETS require referred students work with their OVR counselor.

If eligible and MSD, students and their OVR counselor will work together to develop a plan for services.

A student must want to participate, and the student and counselor ultimately decides upon the OVR services that best fit that student's needs.

What is a good referral? Ask these questions:

Does the student have a disability that interferes with their preparing for, getting, keeping, advancing in, or regaining employment in a career of their choosing?

Does the student want to work?

Can the student benefit from OVR services with an outcome of competitive integrated employment

Questions?

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Harrisburg District Office

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OVR District Office Directory: <https://www.dli.pa.gov/Individuals/Disability-Services/ovr/Pages/OVR-Office-Directory.aspx>