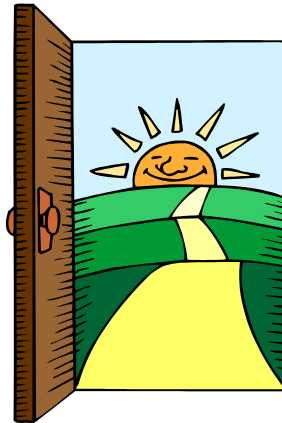


# ***OPENING DOORS TO THE FUTURE***

## **Transition from School to Work**



***Discover DVRS***

***<http://lwd.state.nj.us/labor>***

***New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services***

***New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development***



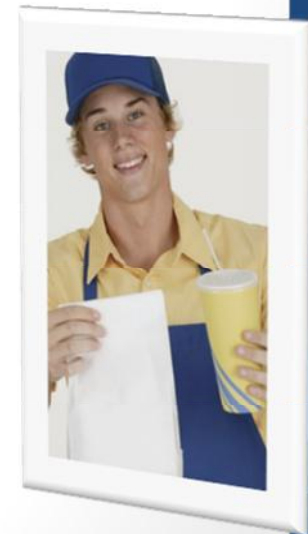
# *Who is DVRS?*



- The DVRS is the designated state agency administered through the federal government and the New Jersey Dept. of Labor & Workforce Development (LWD) that helps individuals with disabilities prepare for, obtain, and maintain gainful employment.
- DVRS professional staff are master level vocational rehabilitation counselors who are trained to assist people with disabilities achieve successful employment outcomes.

- *Mission Statement*

It is the Mission of DVRS to “enable eligible individuals with disabilities to achieve an employment outcome consistent with their strengths, priorities, needs, and capabilities.”



*DVRS assists individuals prepare for, obtain, & maintain  
“competitive employment”*

*Full or part-time work performed in the community for  
which the individual is paid at least minimum wage.*

*(For the complete definition see below.)*



- **Competitive employment** means work—(i) in the competitive labor market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting; and (ii) for which an individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.” [34 CFR §361.5(b)(11)]. (Code of Federal Regulations)

- **Integrated Setting** – An employment setting typically found in the community in which the employee with a disability is working in the same setting as those without a disability. And...interacts to the same extent that non-disabled individuals in comparable positions interact with their fellow co-workers.

~CFR, 361.5(b)33



## What is the Employment First Initiative?

Employment First is a concept to facilitate the full inclusion of people with the most significant disabilities in the workplace and community. Under the Employment First approach, community-based, integrated employment is the first option for employment services for youth and adults with significant disabilities.

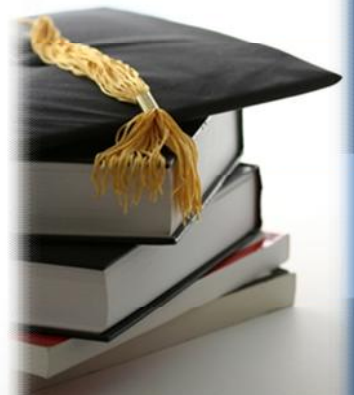
~US Dept. of Labor (USDOL)

New Jersey became the 14<sup>th</sup> state to adopt an Employment First initiative.

DVRS fully supports this initiative and encourages any individual with a significant disability who wants to work in competitive employment to contact their local DVRS office to speak to a DVRS counselor.

## *What does DVRS offer to transition students and schools?*

- DVRS collaborates with school districts to provide consultation, eligibility determination and transition planning for youth with disabilities.
- The goal of this collaboration is for students to have a “seamless transition” from school to work!



# How does DVRS professional staff interact with students, parents, and school staff?



- **DVRS counselors assigned to schools:** DVRS counselors are assigned to work with individual secondary schools which provides the school with a single point of contact within DVRS.
- **Lead Transition Counselor:** Every local DVRS office has a counselor who assists in coordinating the transition related activities for the office.
- **Statewide Transition Coordinator:** There is a Program Planning Development Specialist (PPDS) in DVRS Central Office who coordinates transition activity on a statewide basis.
- **Consultations:** DVRS counselors can provide consultations to school staff, students and parents as soon as student is age 14. Most of these consultations take place over the phone, but there may be times that a DVRS counselor provides such consultation at a meeting or presentation held at a secondary school.

## *Continued...*

- **Presentations**: DVRS counselors can make presentations at secondary schools for staff, students, and parents when their schedule allows.
- **IEP Meetings**: For the most part, when the DVRS counselor attends IEP meetings it is for those students who are consumers of DVRS. DVRS counselors may attend meetings of other students if deemed appropriate, but only after having met with the student previously or at the very least having reviewed appropriate school documentation. Note: Such attendance is dependent on the counselor's schedule. Some counselors may also be available via conference call if not able to come in person.



# At What age may a student begin to work with DVRS?



- As soon as a student turns age 14, DVRS counselors can provide consultation for a student, his or her parent/guardian, school staff, and other designated individuals working on the student's behalf.
- Such consultation would be based on the student's current or anticipated vocational rehabilitation needs and would require the written consent of the student's parent/guardian.
- Please note however, that the student may not have his or her case opened with DVRS and receive services until such time, that the student is at least two years away from exiting the school system.

## **Examples of consultations...**



- Consulting with school, student, parent about the student's disability related needs in relation to future employment, i.e. need of specific types of assistive technology, job coach, physical or mental therapies, among others.
- Providing information about disability related laws and policies.
- Making recommendations about the student's vocational plan and opportunities for pre-vocational experiences.
- Recommending other state agencies, community based services, or local resources. Example: the local (CIL) Center for Independent Living.

# Who should be referred to DVRS?

It is encouraged that students be referred to DVRS when...

- ✓ Student has expressed a desire to work in competitive employment.
- ✓ Student is within 2 years of exiting the school system.
- ✓ Student has a significant disability (physical, cognitive, and/or mental impairment) as documented in an IEP (Individualized Education Program), 504 Plan, and/or other evaluations or medical records.
- ✓ Student will require services from DVRS based on his or her disability related needs in order to be successfully employed.



# *What are the Steps in the DVRS process?*

## **1. THE REFERRAL**

- Being referred to DVRS is the 1<sup>st</sup> step!
- Students may be referred to DVRS up to 2 years prior to exiting the school system.
- School staff typically make the referral to DVRS. This fosters the collaboration between the school and DVRS and can streamline the process of obtaining school documentation related to the student's disability.
- Parents are encouraged to ask the school to make the referral to DVRS or may do so themselves if this has not happened by the time the student is two years away from exiting the school system.

**\*The Referral form is not an application.**



# What to Include in a Referral to DVRS...



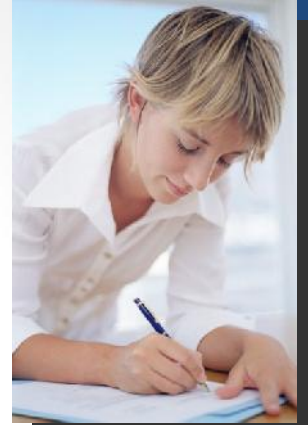
- Copy of the student's most recent IEP, psychological , social and learning assessments.
- Include a diagnosis (NJ Administrative Code 6A:14-3.5) and a current assessment of academic functioning.
- DOE's "Vocational Profile" (found on the DOE website) is an important tool to assist with planning as it documents strengths and limitations in functional terms and may note work interests and abilities gained through community work experience.
- Social skill levels and behavioral or safety issues should be included.

## *Referral information continued...*

- Reports from Structured Learning Experiences (SLE) or Community Based Instruction (CBI) job sampling sites
- Results from Interest testing
- Pertinent medical or psychiatric evaluations.
- Copy of student's Summary of Performance (SOP), developed in senior year.
- Student's self-report of future career goals.

## *Next Step:*

# *2. The Application Process*



- After the referral to DVRS has been made, the student is assigned to a DVRS counselor for an Intake appointment. This is called a “Survey Interview.”
- Parents often accompany the student to this appointment. Please keep in mind the student is the consumer.
- At the Survey Interview, the DVRS counselor will review the student’s educational, medical, psychological & vocational assessments.

# Application Process continued...

- The DVRS Counselor and student will discuss the student's work history, related activities and vocational goals.
- There will also be a discussion of the student's current disability related needs and how this may impact vocational planning.
- The DVRS Counselor will explain the DVRS process and services.
- DVRS is a voluntary service! If the student wants to pursue services with DVRS he or she will then officially apply for services at the Intake Interview.



# Application Process continued...

## **Preparation for the Survey Interview**

- Students can benefit by knowing what key areas will be discussed in their Survey Interview prior to their appointment. This includes:
  - \*Personal Information, Disability History, Education, Employment, and Expectations of DVRS.
- What to Bring to Survey Interview: proof of identification, social security card/number, proof of benefits, i.e. SSI, important school and medical records that have not already been sent to DVRS.

*Next step:*

### *3. Determining Eligibility*



- In order to be eligible for DVRS services, students must have a documented physical, cognitive, or mental/emotional impairment that poses a substantial barrier to employment, and
- Requires vocational rehabilitation services in order to prepare for, secure, maintain, or regain employment
- The Student's school and medical records are reviewed as part of the eligibility determination.
- There is an assessment of the specific barriers or impediments to employment that the student may have as a result of his or her disability.

# *Eligibility Determination continued...*

DVRS evaluates impediments to employment based on Functional Limitations in areas such as:

- **Communication**
- **Interpersonal Skills**
- **Mobility**
- **Self-Care**
- **Self-Direction**
- **Work Skills**
- **Work Tolerance**

*Next Step:*

#### *4. Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)*

- An IPE may be developed after the consumer is determined eligible for DVRS services.
- The IPE is a written agreement between the student and the DVRS counselor.
- The IPE is developed when the student and DVRS counselor together have identified a vocational goal and have determined the specific services that will be needed by the student to achieve such goal.



# *IPE Continued...*

- Provision of services is individualized based on the person's work history, skill level, disability related limitations as well as client choice, interests, abilities and strengths.
- Vocational Counseling and Guidance is the core service provided on every IPE starting at the time that the IPE is initiated.
- All services on an IPE must be related to the vocational goal and serve the intended purpose of successful employment.
- Generally speaking, services other than vocational counseling & guidance will be provided after the student has exited the school system.

## Vocational Counseling and Guidance provided to the student could include:

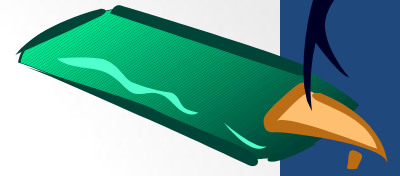
- Career Assessments
- Resume and cover letter preparation
- Mock interviews to practice interviewing skills
- Tips on “Dressing for Success.”
- Job search strategies, including use of current technology
- Self-advocacy skills
- Benefits Counseling
- Educating student as to the skills needed for work readiness
- Information on “In-Demand” occupations.



## *Upon exiting school, other services that may be provided to DVRS Consumers...*

- Diagnostic Evaluations: i.e. Medical, Mental health, Assistive Technology, Pre-Vocational, Driver Evaluations, etc.
- Time-limited Job Coaching
- Supported Employment (intensive job coaching)
- Assistive technology, Auxiliary Aids
- Funding for school or training programs
- Referral and time limited funding for specific type of therapies, and much more...
- Many services are of no cost to the individual including job coaching and vocational counseling & guidance. Other services may be based on a financial needs assessment.

## *Last Step in the DVRS Process: 5. Case Closure*



- The DVRS consumer's case is closed when the individual has been successfully employed for a minimum of 90 days.
- In addition, this typically means that the specific services provided through DVRS have ended.
- Consumers may reapply to DVRS if their job situation changes.



## *Where does the student meet with the DVRS counselor?*



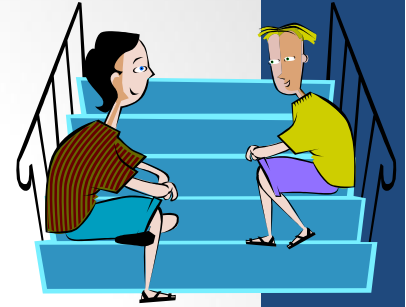
- DVRS has 18 local offices located throughout the state.
- Typically individuals choose to go to the local office that is closest to where they live.
- There are times when a student may have an initial meeting with their DVRS counselor at their school, but most meetings will happen at the DVRS office.
- The administrative offices for DVRS are at the NJ Dept. of Labor building in Trenton, NJ
- Contact information for all offices can be found in the last few slides of this presentation.

## *How the student's family can play a role in transition planning...*



- Promote independence, self-sufficiency, self –advocacy through use of volunteer opportunities, part-time jobs, household chores, etc.
- Assist student in continuing to understand his or her strengths and areas for development in relation to employment.
- Assist student with transportation issues, i.e. use of public transportation, applying for Access Link through NJ Transit.
- *If student receives SSI benefits*, he or she may still work without losing benefits! Find out more information on how employment may impact benefits and medical insurance.
- Consult with the student's Child Study Team, and other school personnel about any and all opportunities for work experiences!
- Learn ways that the student can develop “soft skills”...

## *Why “Soft Skills” are so important!*



- In today’s job market, **more than ever**, employers want their employees to have “soft skills” or what is sometimes referred to as “people skills.”
- Soft skills may include: good manners, communication skills, a sense of humor, motivation, responsible behavior, etc.
- It is important that students, families and schools to find ways for students to develop and practice such skills both at school and at home.
- The U.S. Dept. of Labor has developed a curriculum entitled “Soft Skills to Pay the Bills” (See the slide on resources for the website).

# *Centers for Independent Living*



- Centers for Independent Living (CILS) are funded by DVRS and have four (CORE Services) to include Advocacy, Peer Support, Information & Referral and Independent Living Skills Training.
- CIL(s) can provide another resource/support to students both prior to and after graduation.
- CIL(s) are located in centers across the state. Your local DVRS office can provide contact information for the CIL in your area and let you know in what specific ways the CIL may be involved in providing services to students in your school.

# Resources



- NJ LWD /NJDVRS- [www.lwd.state.nj.us/labor/](http://www.lwd.state.nj.us/labor/) (Click on “vocational rehabilitation” to access DVRS’s information.)
- US Dept. of Labor-Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)- [www.dol.gov/odep](http://www.dol.gov/odep)
- ODEP’s “Soft Skills to Pay the Bills” Curriculum (PDF format), [www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills](http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills)
- Job Accommodation Network (JAN)- [www.askjan.org](http://www.askjan.org)
- NJ Statewide Independent Living Council –[www.njsilc.org/](http://www.njsilc.org/)  
(Provides information about the Centers for Independent Living)
- NCWD/Youth is a source for information about employment and youth with disabilities. -[www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info)
- [www.mynextmove.org](http://www.mynextmove.org)- career planning website geared toward youth.
- SPAN (parent training information center in New Jersey providing information and resources regarding children with disabilities) [www.spannj.org](http://www.spannj.org)

# *How to Contact DVRS*

*There are eighteen offices located throughout New Jersey.*

*To learn more about how DVRS can help, or if you have questions about the information presented contact the office nearest you as listed in the next slide.*

DVRS also has an  
administrative office  
located in Trenton, NJ.  
This office can be reached  
at:

(609) 292-5987,

(609) 292-2919, (TTY)

Website:

<http://lwd.state.nj.us>





## DVRS Local Offices

- ❖ **Bridgeton (Cumberland, Salem)**  
**856-453-3888**
- ❖ **Camden (Camden)** 856-614-2500
- ❖ **Elizabeth (Union)** 908-965-3940
- ❖ **Hackensack (Bergen)** 201-996-8970
- ❖ **Hackettstown (Sussex, Warren)**  
908-852-4110
- ❖ **Jersey City (Hudson)** 201-217-7180
- ❖ **Randolph (Morris)** (862) 397-5600  
(Option 3 for DVR)
- ❖ **Neptune (Monmouth)** 732-775-1799
- ❖ **Newark (Essex)** 973-648-3494
- ❖ **New Brunswick (Middlesex)**  
732-937-6300
- ❖ **Paterson (Passaic)** 973-742-9226
- ❖ **Pleasantville (Atlantic)** 609-813-3933
- ❖ **Somerville (Somerset, Hunterdon)**  
908-704-3030
- ❖ **Thorofare (Gloucester)** 856-384-3730
- ❖ **Toms River (Ocean)** 732-505-2310
- ❖ **Trenton (Mercer)** 609-292-2940
- ❖ **Westampton (Burlington)** 609-518-3948
- ❖ **Wildwood (Cape May)** 609-523-0330