



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT FOR AGING  
AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

Division of Rehabilitative Services

# Transition Guide

**Connect**

**Explore**

**Prepare**

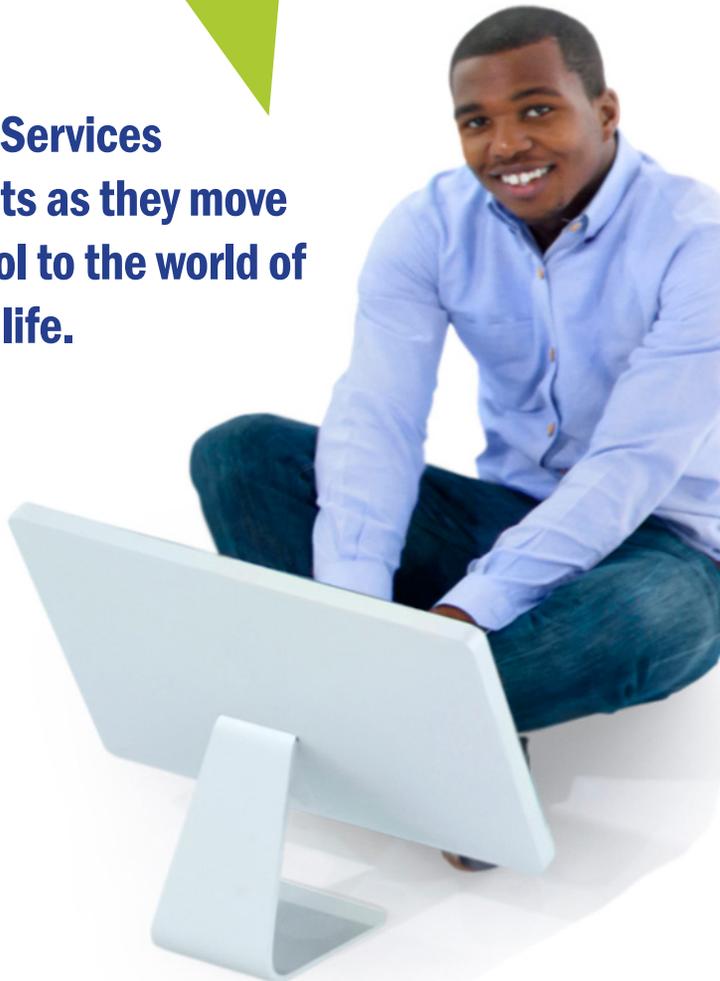
**Succeed**



**GET CONNECTED TO WORK AND LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL**

# Get Connected

**DRS Transition Services support students as they move from high school to the world of work and adult life.**



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## DRS and Transition Services

The Division of Rehabilitative Services is part of the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services. DRS is a federal-state program offering vocational rehabilitation services for people who have disabilities as they prepare for, find or keep a job. Our goal is integrated community based competitive employment (offering at least minimum wage).

DRS has 36 offices located across Virginia and is committed to improving the employment and independence of persons with significant disabilities including youth in transition.

Each DRS office has a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor who specializes in serving youth.

The VR counselor is a trained specialist who works with young people and their families, schools and other agencies to design a plan for employment and successful life beyond high school.

Transition services helps students with disabilities make the adjustment from school to life beyond high school. It is a multi-year process jointly planned with students, their families and service providers to help young people achieve their life and career goals.

Three years before students expect to exit school they should talk with a VR counselor about applying for VR services.

### Referral to DRS

Students with disabilities should be encouraged to apply for VR services. This includes students who:

- ⇒ Have an Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- ⇒ Have a 504 Plan
- ⇒ May not need academic or physical accommodations in high school, but may need them later for employment
- ⇒ Are at risk for dropping out or have already dropped out of high school



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**Early involvement  
is the KEY to  
successful  
transition services.**

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# Explore



## Services offered by DRS

- **Assistive Technology (AT)**—could be a device or a service that will help a person perform tasks more independently.
- **Career Exploration**—offers the opportunity to research different career fields and areas of interests.
- **Career Guidance and Counseling**—is provided by the VR counselor throughout the entire process.
- **Job Development**—may include activities such as searching for job opportunities, completing a job application form, developing a resume, or practicing for an interview.
- **Job Placement**—provided as part of the employment plan.
- **Job Shadowing**—provides an opportunity to observe employees at their job to see how a job is done.
- **On-the-Job Training**—offers on-site instruction for a specific job.
- **Postsecondary Training and Education**—may be offered when needed to reach the employment goal.

- **PERT**—is a program at the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center that provides a comprehensive assessment in vocational, independent living and social skills.
- **Supported Employment**—job coaching may be considered if a person needs specific help learning a job or maintaining a job.
- **Vocational Evaluation and Assessment**—helps to identify a person's strengths, preferences, interests and needs.

## Applying to DRS

DRS recommends that students explore VR services and consider meeting their VR counselor three years before they plan to graduate high school. This early involvement helps students get to know their VR counselor and helps the counselor work with the student to outline activities that lead to achievement of the employment goal.

Call 800-552-5019 or contact the DRS office nearest you or to find out which counselor serves the school division in your area. With parental consent, other individuals such as family, friends, school personnel or other community based service providers may refer a student to DRS.

## Timeline for students

### 3 Years Prior to Exit

- Meet with a VR counselor
- Apply for VR services
- Discover community resources

### 2 Years Prior to Exit

- Assess your skills
- Discover your interests
- Identify your career options

### 1 Year Prior to Exit

- Develop a career plan
- Get work experience
- Learn self-advocacy

### Exit Year & Beyond

- Explore postsecondary options
- Become employed
- Gain independence
- Reach your goals!

## Eligibility for DRS

You may be eligible for DRS if you have a goal of competitive employment in an integrated job setting and meet the criteria for eligibility. Eligible individuals have a physical, mental, emotional, sensory or learning disability that interferes with their ability to work. The person must need DRS services in order to get or keep a job.

When students receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for their disability, they are presumed eligible for DRS Services—if they intend to become employed.



## Transition Teams

Transition teams are made up of many individuals who come together to help the student plan for their future. The team's members represent different areas of knowledge.

Together with the student and their family, transition teams bring together information to help the student make the best choice for the future.

The transition team works with the student and the family; the student is the key member.

Depending on the student's need, the transition team is generally made of the IEP team, representatives from outside agencies, organizations, advocates, therapists, friends and family members.

The student and the family may suggest team members needed to help the student reach identified goals. As much as possible the student should be the leader of the transition team and the transition plan.

See the Important Resources section for possible team representatives.

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**The VR counselor is one of the team members who assists students with their transition plan.**

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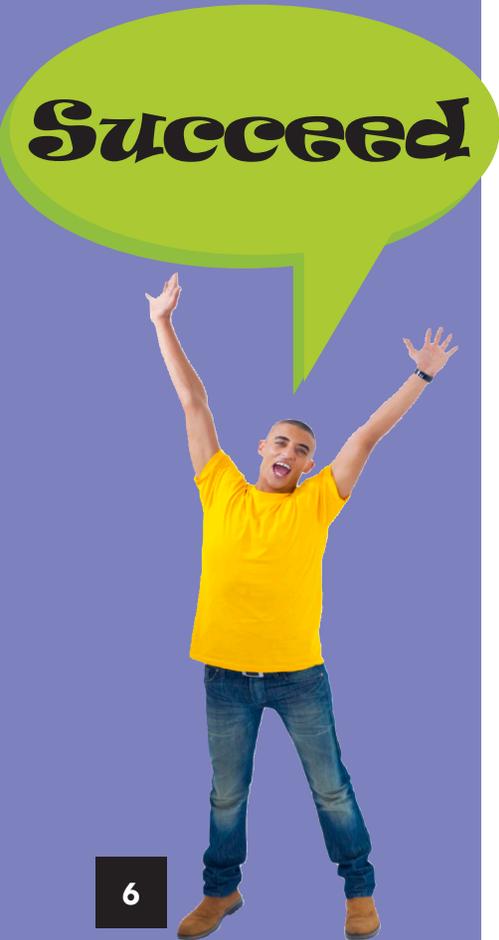
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**Get to know your transition team!**

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**Prepare**





## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Do parents have input in the student's VR plan?**

Yes. A student's parent or guardian is one of the most important transition planning team members. Their support is important in the first meeting with the VR counselor as well as throughout the planning process. A valuable resource for families is the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC).

### **At what age or grade should a young person become involved with DRS?**

DRS recommends that youth become involved three years before they exit or graduate high school. The VR counselor can provide consultative services earlier when appropriate. Early involvement while still in school allows time to help the student explore employment options and plan job readiness activities while still in school.

### **What services will cost the student or family?**

DRS will look at the income of eligible individuals to determine if they will be required to share in the cost of vocational rehabilitation services. Family resources are considered when cost services are needed. Funding is discussed when the employment plan is developed.

Services that are provided without cost are:

- Career exploration
- Career guidance and counseling
- Disability awareness counseling
- Follow-up services after job placement
- Job seeking and placement (no required job coach)
- On-The-Job Training (OJT) program
- Unpaid work experiences
- Vocational assessment

Services that may have a cost share are:

- Assistive technology
- College
- Durable medical equipment or other goods
- Supported employment (working with a job coach)
  - Job seeking
  - Job placement follow along services
- Therapies or other medical services
- Training programs

### **Will DRS pay for college?**

If college education is needed to achieve the employment goal, the amount the family or youth contribute and what DRS contributes is determined based on financial need and other factors.

### **Will DRS pay for psychological testing for college?**

To determine eligibility and for appropriate planning purposes in the development of the employment plan, DRS may pay for psychological testing. This is considered on a case by case basis.

### **If a student declines DRS services, can they apply after graduation?**

Yes. DRS provides services to persons with disabilities of all ages. Early involvement is encouraged in order to take advantage of a team approach while a student is in school. Some students may not be interested in services until after they have exited school or have found difficulty navigating the world of work on their own.

### **What services are not available through DRS?**

Per federal regulations, DRS does not fund services in non-integrated employment settings such as Sheltered Workshops. DRS cannot purchase vehicles or homes under any circumstances, nor can we pay existing debts. This includes debts, liens, judgments, outstanding bills, fines, court costs, interest payments and similar expenses.

## Important Resources

**211**– Connects you to a trained professional, who can provide fast, free, confidential referrals to a wide variety of health and human services in your community. Some of the services include: employment, work initiatives, support to people with disabilities ([Virginia Easy Access](#)), after school programs, nutrition programs and physical and mental health resources. Dial 2-1-1 or go to [www.211virginia.org](http://www.211virginia.org).

**Centers for Independent Living**– CILS are non-residential places of action and coalition, where persons with disabilities learn empowerment and develop the skills necessary to make lifestyle choices. Centers provide services and advocacy to promote the leadership, independence, and productivity of people with disabilities. Go to [www.vadrs.org/cbs/cilslisting.htm](http://www.vadrs.org/cbs/cilslisting.htm) to find a Center near you or call 800.552.5019 or 800.464.9950 for TTY.

**I'm Determined**– Focuses on self-advocacy providing direct instruction, models and opportunities to practice skills associated with self-determined behavior. The self-determined student knows how to set and achieve goals and has a greater understanding of personal strengths and how to get support for areas of need. This project facilitates youth, especially those with disabilities to undertake a measure of control in their lives, helping to set and steer the course rather than remaining the silent passenger. [www.ImDetermined.org](http://www.ImDetermined.org)

**Parent Resource Centers**– PRCs assist parents with questions and planning as well as provide resources and training sessions. About 49 of the 134 school divisions in Virginia maintain a PRC. In school divisions without PRCs, parents should contact teachers or administrators for the information and assistance they need. To see if a PRC is in your school division visit [www.vaprcs.org](http://www.vaprcs.org).

**Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition Program**–PERT is a highly effective school-to-work transition initiative supported by the [Virginia Department of Education](#) and administered through the [Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services](#) at Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC). It assists students in their transition

from high school to postsecondary options through assessments in vocational, independent living and social skills. PERT services are provided on the WWRC Campus where students reside in a dormitory. [www.wwrc.net/PERT.htm](http://www.wwrc.net/PERT.htm)

**Social Security Work Incentives**– If you receive government benefits such as SSI, SSDI, food or housing assistance, Community Work Incentive Coordinators can discuss how employment may maximize your monthly income. The CWIC or your VR counselor can also help connect you to a Work Incentives Specialist who provides individualized planning regarding your benefits. For details go to [www.socialsecurity.gov/work](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work) or call the Ticket to Work Help Line at 866.968.7842 or 866.833.2967 (TTY).

**Virginia Assistive Technology System**– VATS assists those who need assistive technology to get appropriate and affordable equipment or devices. VATS helps people to learn about the range of available technology, select the most appropriate device, receive training on how to use the selected device and find resources that may pay for the device. Call 800.435.8490 or go to [www.vats.org](http://www.vats.org).



## Important Resources

**Virginia Career VIEW**– Vital Information for Education and Work is recognized as the Commonwealth's Career Information Delivery System for all students in grades K-8 in Virginia. Virginia Career VIEW also serves school counselors, educators, workforce development professionals, students, parents and job seekers through career resources, research, outreaches and professional development training. Call the Career Information Line at 800.542,5870 or go to [www.vaview.org](http://www.vaview.org).

**Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services** DBHDS is Virginia's public mental health, intellectual disability and substance abuse services system, is comprised of 16 [state facilities](#) and 40 locally-run [community services boards](#) (CSBs). The CSBs are the point of entry into the publicly-funded system of services for mental health, intellectual disability, and substance abuse. CSBs provide pre-admission screening services 24-hours per day, 7 days per week. For a location near you visit [www.dbhds.virginia.gov/individuals-and-families/community-services-boards](http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/individuals-and-families/community-services-boards).

**Virginia Department of Education**– VDOE is the administrative agency for Virginia's public schools. It offers specific guidance and resources for families including graduation requirements, special education policies, announcements and other helpful information. Their website is designed to make information easy to find and accessible to educators, parents, students or someone interested in learning more about the department and the commonwealth's public schools. [www.doe.virginia.gov](http://www.doe.virginia.gov)

**Virginia Education Wizard**– an online program that can help students and families to explore careers; assess skills, interests and values; pursue a career; find a college that is right, pay for college, transfer from a community college to a university, save for college, apply for financial aid and request reasonable accommodations. [www.vawizard.org/wizard/home](http://www.vawizard.org/wizard/home)

**Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center**– provides people with disabilities comprehensive and individualized services that lead to employment and improved independence. WWRC provides vocational evaluation and training, life skills evaluation and training, medical rehabilitation, assistive technology and other services. Medical rehabilitation services are available for individuals with physical, cognitive, sensory and/or emotional disabilities, such as those related to spinal cord injury, stroke, traumatic brain injury or other neurological or orthopedic conditions. To learn more talk to your VR counselor or go to <http://wwrc.virginia.gov>.



# TIPS FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

## Start Early!

Learn about DRS, meet the VR counselor who covers your school and discuss when you should apply.

## Advocate for yourself!

Learn self determination skills and practice them.

## Participate actively in your planning!

Do your research, know your options and ask questions.

## Communicate with your counselor!

Planning for the future is done **with** you—not **for** you. Initiate communication and keep all appointments made with your counselor and transition team.

## Ask Questions!

What other services may help you? What can you do to help in the process? What should you expect and what are things you cannot expect of DRS?



## Contact DRS

Locate the DRS office nearest to you by going to [www.vadars.org/offices.aspx](http://www.vadars.org/offices.aspx).

VR counselors are assigned to every high school in Virginia.

DARS Central Office  
Division of Rehabilitative Services  
8004 Franklin Farms Drive  
Henrico, Virginia 23229

800-552-5019  
804-662-7000  
Fax: 804-662-9532  
Toll Free TTY: 800-464-9950

[dars@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:dars@dars.virginia.gov)  
[www.vadars.org](http://www.vadars.org)

