

Veterans Benefits Administration

Veteran Readiness & Employment (VR&E) Service (formerly known as Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment)



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Mission/Vision

Mission:

- **Assist Service members and Veterans with service-connected disabilities and an employment handicap prepare for, find, and maintain suitable careers, or maintain a life of independence.**

Vision

- **Focus on the Field**
- **Customer Centric Service Delivery**
- **Highest standard of service**
- **Best in class program outcomes**

Chapter 31: Name Change Update

- Effective June 2020, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) became known as **Veteran Readiness and Employment**.
- The well-known VR&E acronym stayed the same.
- Our rebranded tagline is now: ***Empower. Achieve. Succeed.***
- Feedback received from transitioning Service members, Veterans, and VSOs showed stigma and confusion around the words “vocational” and “rehabilitation” that may deter some from seeking VR&E services.

Our new logo



VETERAN READINESS & EMPLOYMENT

Empower. Achieve. Succeed.

Key Services Provided

- VR&E employs nearly 1,000 professional vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRC) and delivers services through a network of nearly 350 office locations.
- Our service delivery model works to support Veterans where they are located, and includes operations at 56 regional offices, the National Capital Region Benefits Office, approximately 142 out-based offices, 70 Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) installations, and 104 VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC) schools/sites.
- VSOC
 - We currently collaborate with 104 schools across the country to provide educational and vocational counseling and other on-site services to an available population of nearly 86,000 student Veterans on campus.
- IDES
 - We have expanded early intervention counseling and other available services for wounded, ill, injured and other transitioning Service members at 70 military installations.

Key Services Provided (con't)

- Help Veterans with service-related disabilities:
 - Achieve and maintain suitable employment
 - Gain independence in daily living
- Vocational counseling and planning
- Education or vocational training
- Monthly living allowance (in addition to disability compensation)
- Tools to accommodate program (e.g. auto mechanic tools, computers for technology/professional fields)
- Job-seeking skills and assistance in finding employment
- Independent living:
 - Training in activities of daily living
 - Personal adjustment counseling and support services

Chapter 31 Eligibility and Entitlement

Active Duty Service members:

- Expect to receive an honorable discharge upon separation from active duty.
- Apply for Veteran Readiness & Employment services.
- Obtain a memorandum rating 20% or a proposed IDES rating from VA.
- Entitlement is based on establishment of employment handicap resulting from a service-connected disability.
- Sec. 1631(b) of the National Defense Authorization Act (PL 110-181) established VR&E eligibility and automatic entitlement for severely injured active-duty individuals before a VA rating is issued. This became a permanent law on September 30, 2018.

Chapter 31 Eligibility and Entitlement

Veterans:

- Honorable or other than dishonorable discharge.
- VA service-connected disability rating of at least 10% or a memo rating of 20%.
- Apply for Veteran Readiness & Employment services.
- Entitlement is based on establishment of employment handicap resulting from a service-connected disability.
- Serious employment handicap needed to establish entitlement for Veterans rated 10%.

VR&E Tracks

- If entitled to VR&E benefits and services, the Veteran/Service member will work with a VRC to develop a personalized rehabilitation plan following one of five tracks:
 - Re-employment
 - Rapid Access to Employment
 - Self-Employment
 - Employment Through Long-Term Services
 - Independent Living

On-Campus Assistance through VSOC



- VSOC Counselors provide:
 - Adjustment counseling to resolve problems interfering with completion of education programs and entrance into employment.
 - Vocational testing.
 - Personalized Career Planning & Guidance (PCPG/Chapter 36).
 - Expedited VR&E services.
 - Support and assistance to all Veterans with VA benefits regardless of entitlement, benefit usage, or enrollment status.

Tele-counseling | VA Video Connect

Tele-counseling is an option that gives VR&E the capability to provide Veterans with more choice, better access, and flexibility based on their individual needs.

Since COVID, the VA Video Connect (VVC) Tele-counseling platform has supported more than **190k** appointments.

VR&E Service outlined the blueprint for excellence by helping multiple business lines overcome virtual inequities. VR&E engaged with Pension & Fiduciary Service, Loan Guaranty Service and OI&T to allow more than **500** additional VBA users into VVC to facilitate their virtual transformation and help maintain business continuity during COVID-19.

e-Invoicing & e-Authorization

Invoice Payment Processing System (IPPS)

The Invoice Payment Processing System (IPPS) is an electronic invoicing platform which enables vendors to receive electronic authorizations from and submit electronic invoices directly to VR&E. This platform standardizes and streamlines the invoice payment process, significantly reducing the amount of time needed to receive, process, and pay vendors. This platform allows national oversight for compliance with Public Law 115-407 requiring payment within 60 days.

- In FY20, VR&E paid over **161k** invoices for over **\$466M** with **99.97%** paid in less than 60 days and **99.6%** under 30 days, reducing late payments of **6%** in FY19 to **.01%** in FY20.
- FYTD, VR&E paid over **187k** invoices for over **\$545M** with **99.52%** of invoices paid in less than 30 days, and **99.96%** of invoices paid in less than 60 days.
- *VR&E has exceeded **\$1B** for IPPS Payments since it was launched on November 4, 2019.*

Electronic Virtual Assistant (e-VA)

VR&E deployed the first vocational rehabilitation centric artificial intelligence platform in the Federal Government during Q3 FY20. This tool provides automated text message and/or e-mail communication between claimants and staff. Like VVC Tele-counseling, e-VA is an option for claimants.

- Claimant adoption rate of e-VA is **>94%**.
 - e-VA has provided communication and interacted with more than **163k** claimants.
- Since deployment e-VA has documented over **5M** case notes.
 - Automated documentation of routine communications improves continuity and quality of case management.
- e-VA has automatically scheduled and/or rescheduled over **92k** appointments.

VR&E / VCL Collaboration

- VR&E has established a new partnership between VR&E's electronic Virtual Assistant (e-VA) and VA's Veteran Crisis Line (VCL). This amazing capability went live for all e-VA Veterans on February 22, 2021.
- Functionality within the e-VA platform allows for the scanning of electronic Veteran communication for keywords and phrases containing harmful or self-destructive language. VR&E's primary focus in establishing this partnership is to:
 - Provide additional follow-up care for VR&E participants in crisis.
 - Collaboration and follow-through that provides the necessary safeguards to ensure no Veteran misses the opportunity to receive the care they've earned after a mental health crisis.
 - Establish a "Continuation of Care" model that ensures follow-on support will be available.

Case Management Solution (CMS)

- The Case Management Solution (CMS) integrates modernization improvements, re-engineers processes to support a digital and paperless environment and allows for streamlined case management. The CMS platform will fully integrate VA systems and allow a comprehensive 360-degree view of the program participant.
- VR&E is continuing to work through our internal and external stakeholders to configure and deploy the CMS platform. The minimum viable product (MVP) for CH 31 services was completed as scheduled in Q1 FY21. The MVP Pilot began at the Cleveland Regional Office in May 2021. VR&E and Team SBG are now preparing for implementation and deployment at three (3) additional pilot locations(San Diego, Denver, Columbia).

Veteran Orientation Express

- VR&E is continuing its modernization efforts by launching the Veteran Orientation Express (VOX), a web-based tool and video series that are designed to enhance the Veteran experience.
- VOX is embedded in VR&E's Form 28-1900 application page on VA.gov and guides Service members and Veterans through a series of questions to help them understand and determine their eligibility. If the individual appears eligible, the tool will then guide the applicant through a series of videos explaining each of VR&E's Five Tracks to Employment.
- VOX provides Service members and Veterans with clear, accurate information about the VR&E program BEFORE deciding to apply, including VR&E eligibility, basic benefit information, and the VR&E process, so they're able to make an informed choice.
- It should take the average user about 15 minutes to complete the VOX questions, presentation, and videos. VOX could increase program participation.

48 Month Rule Change

- VA recently announced a new interpretation of the “48 Month Rule.”
- Under this change, Veterans who use VR&E benefits PRIOR to other VA education benefits (Post 9/11 GI Bill and MGIB) can still be eligible for up to 48 months of other educational assistance benefit programs.
- In most cases, it will be more advantageous for Service members and Veterans who are eligible for both programs to try VR&E before using other VA education programs. However, the participant should use due diligence to compare the benefits as they have different allowances, stipends, and may be subject to limits on the type of training they can pursue.
- VA is sending letters to those affected by this update.

Employment Services

- During FY 21, VR&E collaborated with Department of Labor to provide apprenticeship training to VR&E field staff with the intent of increasing awareness of the employment opportunities which exist within this arena.
- VR&E has developed Memorandums of Agreement (MOA's) with major national employers such as Microsoft, Amazon, Walgreens and Wells Fargo. These companies offer direct hiring and apprenticeship opportunities for VR&E participants.
- VR&E is partnering with Microsoft to offer the first annual career hiring event to be held this month on July 30, 2021, from 12:00 to 3:00pm ET. Learn more about and/or register to par this event here: www.mssa.virtualcareerfairs.com/event/mssa/vre/login.

Additional Resources

VR&E Homepage

www.va.gov/vre

VSOC Homepage

www.va.gov/careers-employment/vetsuccess-on-campus

IDES Homepage

www.va.gov/careers-employment/vocational-rehabilitation/ides



Question & Answer Session

Thank you!