



TIPS FOR WORKING WITH YOUR ACCES-VR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR (VRC)

If ACCES-VR denies you any services or you otherwise disagree with a decision related to your case, you have the right to have those decisions reviewed within 90 days through due process (administrative review, mediation, or impartial hearing). The Client Assistance Program (CAP) at Disability Rights New York (DRNY) is available to assist with the review and appeals processes. For more information, please contact us.

WHAT ARE ACCES-VR'S ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS?

Understand ACCES-VR's **eligibility requirements**. (1) Do you have a physical or mental disability that is a substantial impediment to employment? (2) Can you benefit from ACCES-VR services by achieving an employment outcome? (3) Do you require ACCES-VR services to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain gainful employment? Be prepared to affirmatively answer those questions in order to be considered eligible for services.

WHAT IS AN IPE

The most important document in your ACCES-VR case is your IPE (Individualized Plan for Employment). It is key that you remain involved in the **IPE development process**, and that you actually agree on your IPE goal with your VRC. An IPE contains the official statement of the employment goal you would like to work toward with ACCES-VR support. Your IPE goal will be a result of your unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, informed choices and interests. A finalized IPE must have been signed by both you and your VRC before going into effect. Your IPE will specify all services that are to be provided to you by ACCES-VR and their service providers, as appropriate, to help you meet the stated goal.

Remember that ACCES-VR's goal for you is **EMPLOYMENT**. If you want a service from them, you need to relate it to your case as a necessary service for you to reach the employment goal stated on your IPE.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WORKING WITH MY VRC?

Don't leave any meeting with your VRC without having a **plan for next steps**. *Is it your responsibility to obtain some documentation? Does your VRC have to explore a particular service on your behalf with a provider? Whose responsibility is it to take a next step, and how/when do you and your VRC plan to touch base about it?*

If the service you are requesting is a type of **rehabilitation technology** (which includes assistive technology services or devices), ACCES-VR needs to understand how that technology will help you prepare for, obtain, or maintain employment. The technology needs to help you overcome a functional limitation imposed by your disability.

If you and your counselor cannot agree on whether or not you need rehabilitation technology to complete your employment goal, you can request an evaluation. The evaluator will be an ACCES-VR provider (not your VRC) that is a contractor who conducts assessments and recommendations.

Maintain **consistent contact** with your VRC, and be sure to update him or her on any activity that may affect your case (you moved to a new address; you were offered a job; your SSI or SSDI were cut off; you are applying to training or education programs; etc.). Consistent contact with your VRC is crucial to your case's success. If your VRC has not heard from you for a long time, your case may be closed based on lack of contact.

Throughout your case with ACCES-VR, be cooperative and tactful. Understand that your VRC's role in your case is very important, and the **working relationship** with him or her matters a great deal. Each of your interactions count and even in times of disagreement you should be as respectful of your VRC as you would like him or her to be of you.

At every meeting with your counselor, have a positive attitude and be prepared. Be willing to collaborate with your VRC and **participate fully**.

Know what services you want from ACCES-VR and why. Present your requests in a cordial, business-like way. Always be prepared to **justify the services you are requesting** clearly and calmly. Remember that all services provided must be agreed upon in your IPE. If you have paid for an educational or other expense on your own before discussing it with your VRC, it will likely not be considered reimbursable by ACCES-VR, and the agency will have no obligation to pay for it.

Keep in mind that ACCES-VR works with a **specific step-by-step process**. Most often, it is in your best interest to work with the process, instead of against it. For example, submit any paperwork ACCES-VR may require, attend scheduled meetings with your counselor, and participate in any requested assessments.

WHAT ARE DRNY AND CAP?

Disability Rights New York (DRNY) is New York's designated Protection & Advocacy (P&A) system. DRNY provides advocacy, litigation, coalition-building, and public information services for people with disabilities, as well as technical support for other advocacy agencies.

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is a federal program exclusively operated by DRNY to assist New Yorkers with disabilities with questions or problems encountered while receiving or applying for vocational rehabilitation services from state agencies such as ACCES-VR. DRNY also advocates for those who receive services from Independent Living Centers (ILCs), and for those applying for or receiving services from Tribal VR offices.

If you are experiencing a conflict within your ACCES-VR case, DRNY can contact your VRC to **negotiate a resolution**. When a negotiated settlement is not possible, DRNY may choose to represent individuals at formal mediation, administrative reviews, impartial hearings, and/or in court. Please contact DRNY if you would like to discuss your ACCES-VR case.

DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW YORK CONTACT INFORMATION

Albany:

*725 Broadway, Suite 450
Albany, New York 12207
Fax: 518-427-6561*

Brooklyn:

*25 Chapel Street, Suite 1005
Brooklyn, New York 11201
Fax: 718-797-1161*

Rochester:

*44 Exchange Blvd., Suite 110
Rochester, New York 14614
Fax: 585-348-9823*

Mail@DRNY.org • www.DRNY.org

Toll free: 1-800-993-8982 • Voice: 518-432-7861 • TTY: 518-512-3448

DISCLAIMER:

THIS INFORMATION SHEET IS INTENDED TO GIVE BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT ACCES-VR. DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW YORK ACCEPTS NO LIABILITY FOR THE CONTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT OR FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF ANY ACTIONS TAKEN ON THE BASIS OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ACCES-VR, SEE ACCES.NYSED.GOV.

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH YOUR ACCES-VR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR, V.1.0