



Guide to Working with Your Local Vocational Rehabilitation Office

What is Vocational Rehabilitation?

Having chronic kidney disease has changed your life, but there are things you can do to reduce the impact on your lifestyle and income. You can feel well enough to work on dialysis. With the exception of heavy physical labor, most dialysis patients are capable of performing the specific job tasks they did before they started dialysis. If you are on dialysis, you are eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counseling. VR can assist with:

- Evaluation of your areas of interest and work history
- Training
- In-home independence (home modifications if related to employment)

What can I expect when I go to a VR office for employment counseling and placement services?

To find your local Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) office, visit the Florida Department of Education / Division of Vocational Rehabilitation at <http://www.rehabworks.org/> and click on “VR Office Directory.” You may search for offices by County or Area.

- Contact the VR Office in your area, and ask about their application process. A referral is not needed – you can contact them directly.
- Some VR offices have a group orientation session. During orientation, you will be provided with a copy of the “VR Handbook of Services.” This handbook can also be found on line at <http://www.rehabworks.org/index.cfm>.
- You will be asked to fill out a VR application.
- After the application is received by VR, you will be contacted and assigned to a counselor. The VR office has 3 business days to contact applicants, from the time a referral is received.
- Keep in regular contact with your VR counselor, and be persistent throughout the process.
- The counselor will determine if you are eligible. Many factors can determine eligibility, such as:
 - How motivated the applicant is to work
 - The physician’s release to work
- You may be placed on a waiting list for services after eligibility is determined. If so, priorities for who is served first are based on “category of status” and date of application. For individuals who are assigned the highest priority (Category 1), the wait is currently one-two months. If the wait is long, talk to your dialysis social worker about using an employment network instead.
- Once you are taken off of the wait list, an individualized written plan for services will be developed.
- Tell your dialysis social worker how the VR process is going, and if you need help.

What steps should I take next?

- Ask your dialysis social worker today about vocational rehabilitation, and about how your treatment plan and schedule can fit your goals.
- Review links and tools for download at Network 7’s “Going Back to Work” web page (www.fmqai.com):
 - Information on how you can work and keep your Social Security benefits. Ticket to Work information
 - Directory of Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Offices
 - Information on training and access to personal computers
 - How to find a center that offers home dialysis treatment options