

# An Overview of Vocational Rehabilitation

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What to Expect When Working With Vocational Rehabilitation

# The Purpose of Vocational Rehabilitation

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- “The purpose of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program is to empower individuals with disability particularly individuals with significant disability to achieve high quality employment outcomes to which they aspire and that are consistent with their unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and informed choice.”
  - 34 CFR 361.50: Written Policies Governing the Provisions of Services for Individuals with Disabilities.
    - OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES,  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
    - Rehabilitation Services Administration

# Federal Mandate

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- Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as Amended Through P.L. 114-95 Enacted December 10, 2015
- Any State that submits a State Plan to the Secretary is eligible to be funded
- 78.7% Federal dollars and a 21.3% state match combine to provide funding.
- Vocational Rehabilitation is available in all 50 states

# Vocational Rehabilitation Mission

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- To serve eligible people with disability in obtaining and retaining employment that is commensurate with abilities, interests and limitations.
- Meeting the individual rehabilitation needs of each person
- Managing the financial resources to provide services that are both necessary and reasonable.

# AgrAbility Mission

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- “The vision of AgrAbility is to enable a lifestyle of high quality for farmers, ranchers. And other agricultural workers with disabilities to that they may succeed in rural America.”
- Success includes gainful employment in production agriculture, related occupations, access to appropriate assistive technology and evidence-based information related to the treatment and rehabilitation of disabling conditions.

# Why is AgrAbility-VR Relationship Important

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- Farming is inherently hazardous – Accidents, physical wear and tear, aging all contribute to disability
- Research indicates that the risk of depression increases with delays in returning to work
- Real recovery occurs when they are able to return to their chosen profession
- Evidence indicates a strong desire to return to farming
- Refusal to be constrained by disability

# Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Hierarchy

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- Same job – Same employer
- Different job – Same employer
- Same job – Different employer
- Different job – Different employer
- Farmers have a higher successful rehabilitation rate than the general population
- 98% success rate for VR of AgrAbility consumers

# Eligibility for VR Services

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- To be eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services an individual must
  - Have a physical or mental impairment which, for such an individual, constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment
  - Require Vocational Rehabilitation Services
  - Will benefit from the services to successfully obtain and retain employment
  - Order of selection: Most significant disability, must have three areas of functional limitation (communication, interpersonal skills, mobility, self-care, self-direction, work skills, or work tolerance)



# Comprehensive Assessment

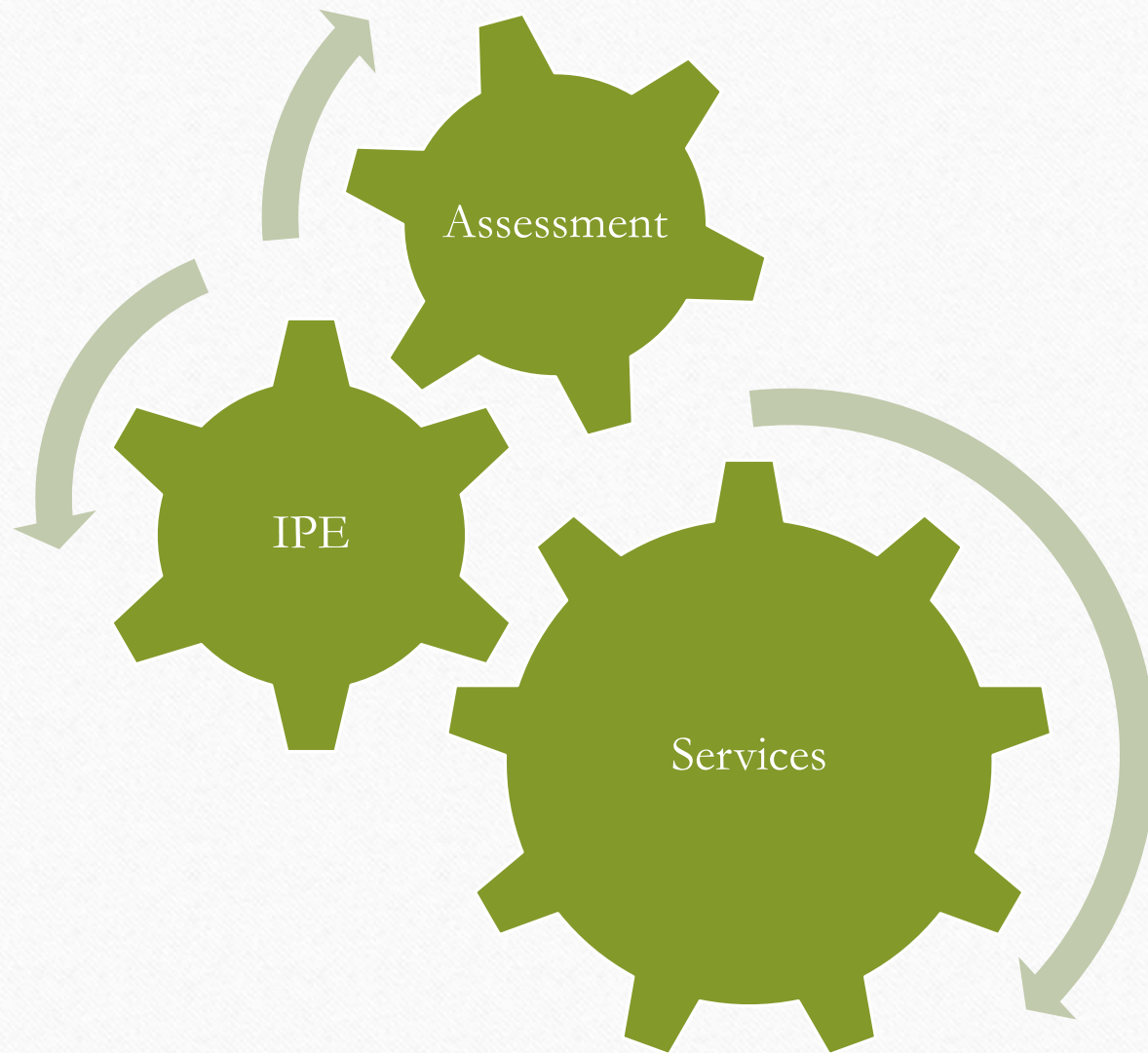
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- Comprehensive assessment begins after an individual has been determined eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services
- Assesses the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice of the VR eligible individual
- Determines the goals and objectives of the individual
- Determines the nature and scope of Vocational Rehabilitation services
- Comprehensive assessment is used to develop the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

# IPE Mandatory Components

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- Description of the specific employment outcome
- Description of the specific rehabilitation services
- Timeline for initiation of services and achieving the employment outcome
- Description of vendors chosen to provide services
- Description of criteria to evaluate progress toward the employment goal
- Terms and conditions (joint responsibilities) of the IPE



# Successful Employment Outcome: VR Closure

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- Consistent with the individual's interests, abilities and limitations
- May include self-employment, telecommuting, business ownership
- Must be in an integrated environment (not in an isolated environment or sheltered workshop)
- At or above federal minimum wage
- Minimum of 90 days following the completion of rehabilitation services

# Client Assistance Program (CAP)

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- CAP is authorized by the Rehabilitation Act
- 56 CAPs one in each state, territory and Washington DC
- Assist any client with programs covered by the Act primarily VR and IL (independent living)
- The client must initiate the appeal process
- Intent is to lessen the feeling of intimidation and restore relationship between client and VR
- Eligibility determination and IPE most common VR components requiring CAP

# AgrAbility and CAP

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- Client must take the lead
- AgrAbility staff may advocate for client (with client's permission) in consultation with CAP
- AgrAbility recommendations must address functional limitations as related to employment goal, must be necessary and reasonable
- AgrAbility staff may serve as an expert witness in regard to employment goal, accommodations and/or AT in an administrative hearing

# Recent AgrAbility/SRAP Experiences with Vocational Rehabilitation

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- Change in Performance Accountability Requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Training and Employment Guidance Letter WIOA NO. 26-16
- Review of Assistive Technology over \$5000.00 at Federal Level by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)