

Frequently asked questions

What is vocational rehabilitation?

Vocational rehabilitation refers to all services provided to restore the eligible veteran to employment or increase his or her independence in daily living.

How do I qualify for vocational rehabilitation?

The entitlement determination is an individualized decision, however, there are a couple of guiding principles applicable to every case:

Have you been or will you be discharged under honorable conditions with a service-connected disability?

Does the service-connected disability substantially contribute to an employment handicap? That is, are rehabilitation services necessary to restore you to suitable gainful employment; or, if employment is jeopardized, maintain that employment?

It appears I'm entitled - what am I entitled to?

That is dependent upon what services you need to return to or maintain employment. Rehabilitation services can include direct placement assistance, job site modifications, skill training, medical services, etc.

Who decides if I'm entitled and to what?

A Department of Veterans Affairs Counseling Psychologist or Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will review your situation and make the entitlement determination. If entitled, the evaluation will continue to identify a suitable vocational goal and the services required to obtain that goal. Our mandate is to restore the entitled veteran back into the workforce as soon as possible. In all cases we rule out direct placement services prior to considering skill training.

What do you mean by "Suitable Employment"?

Suitable employment is a term meaning entry level employment which is not inconsistent with your general pattern of interests, aptitudes, and abilities; is not contra-indicated by your service-connected or non service-connected conditions; and is generally available in the area you live.

What?

Is it a real job not jeopardized by your service and non service-connected disabilities?

I have some post high school training but feel I need more to advance or change jobs. Can vocational rehabilitation help me?

First we have to establish if rehab services are necessary. Is your current job unsuitable or jeopardized? If not, then you would not be entitled to vocational rehabilitation services at this time. If so, we would analyze what skills and training you bring to the job market and, if sufficient, assist you in marketing those skills to a suitable position. If additional skills need to be developed, a goal would be agreed upon and a plan of services developed leading to that goal.

My disability is so severe, I don't think I can return to employment. What can vocational rehabilitation do for me?

First of all, apply. We can do extraordinary things to assist the most severely disabled veterans become gainfully employed. If, however, employment is not reasonably feasible, there are many services we can provide to help you become more independent in your daily living.

What is the process?

Upon receipt of your application for vocational rehabilitation and confirmation that you are an honorably discharged veteran with a service connected disability, you will be scheduled for evaluation and assessment services, either with a VA employee or a rehabilitation professional under contract to the VA. The evaluation will consist of your history; assessment of your aptitudes, interests, and abilities; your current state of job readiness; and limitations imposed by your service and non service-connected disabilities.

A report is prepared and reviewed by a VA rehabilitation counselor who then makes the entitlement determination. If entitled, additional counseling is provided to assist in identifying an appropriate goal and developing a plan of services to achieve that goal.

How long does this take?

Assuming that a rating has been made on your service-connected disability, you should receive an appointment within 30 days of your application. You should receive a decision concerning entitlement within two months of your first appointment.

But I want to start school now - can't I expedite this?

Only if we bumped some other disabled veteran. Also, even if entitled, schooling may not be the required rehabilitative service. Unless you have other funding available, do not start a program assuming it will be covered by vocational rehabilitation. You must be careful - remember, we can't train you for an unsuitable vocation nor provide training services if you are already qualified for suitable employment.

What effect does all this have on my disability rating?

None. Participation in a vocational rehabilitation program will not trigger any rating action, nor does the percentage of your rating.