

# MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

## MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING OFFICERS

**A copy of any licenses, certifications, or credentials listed in these qualifications must be attached with your application.**

### **1. Education and Legal Credentials:**

- a. Juris Doctor (J.D) degree is preferred:
  - i. Advanced legal training is needed to interpret and apply complex federal and state statutes, regulations, and case law governing vocational rehabilitation.
- b. State Bar admission
  - i. An active license to practice law in the State of Mississippi (or the jurisdiction served)

### **2. Professional Experience:**

- a. Vocational Rehabilitation or Disability Determination experience:
  - i. Applicants without a Juris Doctor degree **are required** to have a minimum of four years of professional experience interpreting and applying VR program eligibility laws, or two years in a lower-level adjudicative role (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Specialist).
  - ii. Hands-on delivery of VR services or involvement in disability determination processes is **preferred**, but not required.
- b. Administrative Law and Hearing Practice:
  - i. Experience having performed prior services as an administrative law judge, hearing examiner, or attorney conducting formal hearings under federal/state VR statutes is preferred, but not required.
  - ii. Applicants must demonstrate an ability to manage hearing procedures: administering oaths, ruling on motions/evidence, and maintain hearing records.
- c. Knowledge of VR Laws, Regulations and Policies:
  - i. Federal VR Statutes and Regulations:
    - 1. Applicants must have an in-depth familiarity with the Rehabilitation Act (34 CFR Part 361), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and RSA guidance.
  - ii. State VR Plan and Agency Procedures:
    - 1. An understanding of Mississippi's VR State Plan, administrative rules, policy manuals, and appeal procedures is preferred, but not required.

- d. Core Skills and Competencies:
  - i. Impartiality and Ethical Conduct:
    - 1. Applicants must not be a public-agency employee (aside from ALJ or comparable roles), member of the State Rehabilitation Council, or previously involved in the applicant's VR services.
    - 2. Applicants must not have any personal, professional, or financial conflicts of interest and be able to maintain a strict neutrality in all cases.
  - ii. Procedural and Evidentiary Expertise:
    - 1. Applicant must have a proficiency with rules of evidence, hearing protocols, and procedural motions.
  - iii. Analytical and Legal Writing:
    - 1. Applicant must have a superior ability to analyze voluminous case records, assess credibility, and draft clear, well-reasoned written decisions articulating findings of fact and conclusions of law.
  - iv. Oral Communication and Courtroom Management:
    - 1. Applicant must be skilled in conducting hearings, explaining rulings on the record, and handling sensitive disability-related matters with professionalism and respect.
- e. Continuing Education and Professional Development:
  - i. Mandatory CEU's:
    - 1. Applicants **are encouraged to maintain** continuing education units in administrative law, disability law, or VR-specific topics.