**Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services**

**OVR/OVRB Policy and Procedure Manual**

# Section 13: Postsecondary Education and Training Services

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The Offices of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB) sponsor post-secondary education (PSED) such as vocational, college, and other training services that occurs at an accredited post-secondary educational institution or proprietary school for individuals who are determined eligible for OVR/OVRB services.

The procedures included in this section are guidelines for providing PSED and training services when these services are necessary for an individual to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain employment. Individuals interested in obtaining PSED and/or training services shall agree to actively participate in career exploration, research of the labor market, and assessment(s) if necessary to determine an employment goal that is achievable and consistent with the individual’s strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

*NOTE: All PSED students who are twenty-one (21) years of age or younger that did not receive Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) as a high school student, or those who are currently in need of such services should have them planned on his/her IPE. Pre-ETS may be provided by the students’ OVR/OVRB counselor or a chosen third-party provider.*

## 13.0 Post-Secondary Education Terminology

### 13.0.1 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

The **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** is the form required by the U.S. Department of Education, Student Financial Assistance Programs for students requesting financial aid from participating institutions. Eligible individuals requesting assistance from OVR/OVRB to pay for postsecondary education are required to apply for financial aid each year. For more information about the federal Student Financial Assistance Programs and the FAFSA, visit the FAFSA website.

### 13.0.2 Student Aid Report (SAR)

The **Student Aid Report (SAR)** is a report sent to the student verifying information from the FAFSA and indicating eligibility for certain grants and specifying the amount (the Expected Family Contribution) the student and family are required to contribute to higher education costs, according to the Higher Education Act, as amended.

### 13.0.3 Grants and Scholarships

Grants and scholarships are financial support for educational programs provided by sources other than OVR/OVRB which does not need to be repaid and which can be applied to the school the individual will be attending.

### 13.0.4 Work-Study and Loans

Through the application for federal financial aid, students with demonstrated financial need may be offered the opportunity to work in exchange for money for college expenses. Likewise, students and their families may be offered low interest loans. While OVR/OVRB does not require that individuals take out loans or work in work-study programs, students may choose to use these means to defray educational costs.

### 13.0.5 Developmental Courses

Non-credit courses (usually below 100 level) which may be required by an institution in preparation for college level, credit courses. (See 13.7.4)

## 13.1 Types of PSED Programs:

PSED includes academic, career, and technical training programs at an accredited postsecondary educational institution or training facility.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Academic** | Successful completion of coursework leads to an Associate of Arts, Baccalaureate, or higher degree. |
| **Career** | Successful completion of coursework leads to a certificate in a particular business skill area (e.g. automotive technology, barber/stylist, graphic design, office clerk, small engine repair, welding, etc.). It usually provides specific short-term, job-related instruction but does not include broad-based academic courses. Courses such as these are not usually accepted for credit by academic degree programs.  |
| **Technical**  | Successful completion of combined academic and technical coursework leads to a one-year or two-year technical certificate or a two-year technical Associate in Applied Science Degree. |
| **Proprietary School** | Proprietary School sells vocational/occupational courses of instruction, exceeding twenty (20) clock hours in length to the general public for the purpose of training or preparing persons for gainful employment. A Proprietary School is a private, non-public business enterprise owned by one person, a partnership, limited liability corporation, or a corporation. |

## 13.2 Accreditation Standards

The agency will not authorize funds to an institution (school) that is not accredited, licensed, or approved by the appropriate accrediting or licensing authority. Schools with provisional accreditation may be used; however, the counselor is to use caution when individuals elect to attend one of these schools. If a school loses its accreditation during the school year, the counselor is to notify the individual immediately and agency funds will cease at the end of that semester. The counselor is also advised to contact his or her manager who will then contact the PSED Program Coordinator to assist in determining when (or if) a school that was issued provisional accreditation has achieved full accreditation status.

### 13.2.1 Approved Schools / Institutions

Mississippi Community College Board, Office of Proprietary Schools provides a list of schools that are registered with the Commission of Proprietary Schools and College Registration to provide vocational, career and/or technical training in Mississippi.

To find the list of schools please visit <https://www.mccb.edu/>. Under ‘About’ tab on the right side of page, click on ‘Divisions & Offices’. Next, scroll down and click on ‘Proprietary Schools’. Click ‘General CPSCR Information and scroll down to ‘Documents’ and click ‘CPSCR Registered Schools’.

The Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation provides a list of schools that are approved and not approved by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools for the current school year.

To find the lists of colleges and universities approved and not approved to operate in Mississippi, please visit [www.mississippi.edu/mcca](http://www.mississippi.edu/mcca). Click “institutions” and the links for approved colleges and entities not approved will appear on the next page.

*NOTE: Before sponsoring an individual at any institution (including private and/or out-of-state institutions, short-term training programs, and correspondence courses) that does not appear on these listings, the counselor should contact his/her manager. The manager will then contact the PSED Program Coordinator for further investigation of the school’s accreditation status.*

## 13.3 Training Services in Institutions of Post-Secondary Education

OVR/OVRB supports individuals in post-secondary education in many ways, depending on the approved employment goal, disability factors and OVR/OVRB policy. OVR/OVRB may only provide financial assistance for training in institutions of post-secondary education training/education if the training/education is required for achievement of the employment goal on an approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE).

Such assistance may include provision of:

1. Financial assistance for tuition, fees and books consistent with financial need.
2. Auxiliary aids for the individual’s use while in school (aside from in-class accommodations provided by the school), such as a note taker for use in completing assignments.
3. Funding of accommodations to enable participation in educationally-related, out-of-class activities (e.g., participation in a study group or professional organization meeting).
4. Guidance and counseling throughout the period of enrollment.
5. Disability-related services (e.g., psychotherapy, to ensure the student is able to focus on academics).
6. Assistance with maintenance and transportation costs.
7. Personal assistance services.

Post-secondary educational institutions have the responsibility to assure that all of their programs are accessible to individuals with disabilities, including provision of in-class reasonable accommodations and access to course content required by students with disabilities.

## 13.4 Training Service Requirements

OVR/OVRB may provide financial assistance for training services in institutions of post-secondary education consistent with the following requirements.

### 13.4.1 Evaluating the Resources and Capabilities of the Individual

Post-secondary training (two-year college degree or vocational certificate programs, four-year college/university, or career school on a credit or non-credit basis) must be consistent with the individual’s strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests.

In addition to the OVR/OVRB eligibility criteria, the following guidelines are to be used when identifying an individual who may reasonably be expected to benefit from PSED services in terms of an employment outcome.

1. Review of existing, relevant information, such as psychological evaluations, school records, college transcripts, SAT and/or ACT scores, and documentation of acceptance to a four-year college/university may contribute to decision making about post-secondary education.
2. When there are complex factors and/or insufficient existing relevant information, consideration may be given to formal assessments which may include placement testing.

Every case being considered for PSED *academic* training shall be staffed with a manager before PSED services can be planned on an individual’s IPE. Counselors shall document the outcome of the staffing in the case note section of the individual’s service record by choosing the case note type “Staffing” from the drop-down menu. This case note should also be titled appropriately so it is easily identifiable for review purposes, and it should contain the name of the manager who participated in the staffing. The note also needs to make it clear that it was discussed and determined that PSED academic training is appropriate for the individual being staffed. After the counselor completes the case note, he/she needs to print it and have it signed by the manager or his/her designee (i.e., DDM, RM, etc.) before filing in the service record.

### 13.4.2 Trial Semesters

1. **Trial Semester Supported by OVR/OVRB** – If review of school achievement, academic background and/or placement testing indicates the client may have difficulty succeeding in college level courses (e.g., if placement testing indicates a need for one or two semesters of developmental courses), consideration may be given to OVR/OVRB financial support for a trial semester/grading period. The OVR/OVRB counselor will work with the individual and the academic advisor of the institution to identify appropriate courses to be taken during the trial semester/grading period. OVR/OVRB financial assistance for a subsequent semester/grading period will depend on the grades achieved.
2. **Trial Semester at Client’s Expense** – If review of school achievement, academic background and/or placement testing indicates post-secondary education is not a realistic goal for the individual (e.g., more than two semesters of developmental courses needed), the counselor shall provide vocational guidance and counseling to assist in exploring:
3. Employment options that do not require post-secondary education.
4. Adult Basic Education resources in the community.

In the event the individual still wishes to pursue post-secondary education and demonstrate their ability to do so, the individual will be required to attend a trial semester/grading period at their own expense. The OVR/OVRB counselor will work with the individual and the academic advisor of the institution to identify appropriate courses to be taken during the trial semester/grading period. OVR/OVRB financial assistance for a subsequent semester/grading period will depend on the grades achieved.

## 13.5 Defaulted Student Loans

An individual requesting financial assistance from OVR/OVRB for post-secondary expenses who has defaulted on a student loan or loans, resulting in ineligibility for financial aid through their educational institution, shall take steps to address the default. This includes pursuing deferment or other resolution of the defaulted loan(s) through appropriate channels.

In such cases, the OVR/OVRB counselor will assess the individual's default status, considering its potential relationship to their disability. The counselor will also evaluate the individual’s efforts to resolve the default and any resources the individual may have to address repayment of the loan(s). OVR/OVRB does not assume responsibility for repaying defaulted student loans.

If the individual successfully resolves the default and regains eligibility for financial aid, standard OVR/OVRB policies and procedures for financial assistance will apply.

If the individual is unable to resolve the default, OVR/OVRB financial support will be considered only when the individual demonstrates good cause for their inability to repay the loan(s) and has made genuine, good-faith efforts to defer repayment or otherwise address the issue.

OVR/OVRB payment for higher education expenses for an individual ineligible for Federal student aid because of default requires the approval of the OVR Client Services Director or the OVRB Regional Manager. In such situations, the procedures in this section apply and the individual shall apply for financial aid via FAFSA each year.

## 13.6 Dual Enrollment

A student may be enrolled in secondary school and enrolled at a community college or university that participates in dual enrollment.

Dual enrollment may be used to help the student ease the transition from high school to college by allowing the student to gain hands-on experience into post high school academics.

Prior to working with a student to plan dual enrollment, the following shall occur:

1. The counselor shall obtain a copy of the student’s high school transcript.
2. The student’s grade point average (GPA) shall be at least a 2.00 on a 4.00 scale at the attending school.
3. The counselor shall consult with the school counselor regarding available scholarships and aid.
4. The student shall have enough high school and college course work combined to equal at least four courses.
5. The counselor shall obtain proof for the service record that the student has been accepted into the post-secondary institution.
6. The post-secondary institution shall be accredited; and
7. The college coursework completed by the individual while in dual enrollment shall be required for the college major.

*Exceptions to the guidelines outlined in this section may be granted on a case-by-case basis, provided the individual's unique circumstances warrant such deviation. A written justification by the OVR/OVRB counselor and approval from the OVR district manager, OVRB regional manager or PSED Program Coordinator will be required.*

## 13.7 Special Circumstances: Post-Secondary Education

### 13.7.1 Graduate School

Inclusion of graduate school on the IPE may be considered if the degree is needed for career advancement or if a graduate degree is the standard for entry into the field consistent with the employment goal.

Financial assistance for graduate-level programs requires Administrative Approval from the OVR or OVRB Director, as applicable, prior to drafting an IPE including an employment goal that requires graduate credentials. When graduate school is approved, the policies and procedures in this section apply.

### 13.7.2 Previous Degree

OVR/OVRB support for a post-secondary degree is provided only for individuals who have not already earned a degree.

1. This does not apply to an IPE including a bachelor's degree when the individual achieves an associate’s degree as a step toward the bachelor's degree.
2. In exceptional circumstances when the disability precludes achievement of an employment outcome with current credentials, consideration may be given to OVR/OVRB financial assistance for another degree. OVR or OVRB Director approval is required for an additional degree beyond the first bachelor’s.
3. Selected courses provided to update skills and improve employment opportunities may be provided on an individual basis with the approval of the OVR/OVRB counselor.

### 13.7.3 Full-time/Part-time Attendance

Ideally, the individual should be encouraged to attend on a full-time basis (12 credits or more per semester) so that employment is achieved in a timely manner. Part-time attendance (less than 12 credits per semester) related to disability factors, employment, or other compelling reasons will be considered on an individual basis.

Students shall supply the counselor with a list of the curriculum (courses) required for the degree program they have chosen so the counselor can monitor that successful progress is being made.

Most programs at community colleges take two (2) years and programs at universities take four (4) years to complete if attending school on a full-time basis.

The customary attendance period can only be exceeded with documentation of the reason for the extension and approval by the manager or his/her designee. The reason for exceeding the customary attendance period should be documented in a case note in AWARE™. (See also Section 13.13.3)

**NOTE: An individual is eligible for the Pell Grant for a total of six (6) years when attending school as a full-time student. Time will be prorated for an individual not attending as a full-time student.**

*Length of Training Exception: If the customary attendance period exceeds typical durations due to disability-related needs, extenuating personal circumstances, or other valid reasons, an exception may be approved with proper documentation and approval by the OVR district manager or OVRB regional manager.*

### 13.7.4 Developmental Courses and Core Program Requirements

Many colleges or universities offer a range of courses that help the student prepare for a regular college course. These courses usually have a prefix starting with zero or numbers that are less than 100 (i.e., ENG 0103, MA 0103). Developmental courses do not count toward degree requirements. Although a developmental course may help to improve writing or math skills, it is only seen as a refresher to a specific college level course.

1. Developmental courses must be completed as soon as possible and within trial semesters (see Section 13.4.2).
2. OVR/OVRB support for more than one semester/grading period of developmental/remedial courses requires management approval.
3. Core requirements shall be completed as soon as possible within the planned course of study.

If the educational institution recommends or requires a student to take remedial courses, or if a counselor needs further information to determine if an individual can successfully pursue PSED, the counselor may assist with up to four (4) courses. Service record documentation shall clearly show the need for the courses and how they are necessary for the individual to reach his/her intended employment goal.

*Remedial Courses Exception: Additional remedial courses beyond the four-course limit may be approved on a case-by-case basis, provided the individual's unique circumstances warrant such deviation.*

### 13.7.5 Non-degree Courses

Selected courses that are not part of degree programs may be authorized when such courses are part of an assessment to determine rehabilitation needs or identified on the IPE and necessary for the attainment of the employment goal.

### 13.7.6 Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Education Program (CTP)

Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Education Programs (CTPs) are federally recognized as inclusive post-secondary education programs specifically designed for students with intellectual disabilities.

* [National list of CTPs](https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/intellectual-disabilities)

OVR/OVRB may provide financial assistance to support students or adults attending a CTP while receiving VR services, if it is found to be a necessary service in support of the individual's employment goal. OVR/OVRB financial assistance will be considered on an exceptional basis if the post-secondary education program is awaiting federal review in order to become a CTP. Approval from the regional Manager is required.

Requirements for entrance into a CTP differ slightly from the enrollment criteria of traditional postsecondary education programs, in that a high school diploma or GED is not required. An individual with a high school Special Education Certificate of Completion may attend a CTP.

#### 13.7.6.1 Planning for CTP Services

Best practices suggest the counselor gain input from the team working with the individual when developing the IPE. This could include the individual, their parent/legal guardian, the institution’s CTP Coordinator, and any others involved the individual may wish to be present.

The counselor should also ensure the training to be received from the CTP is consistent with the individual’s strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, informed choice, and necessary to achieve the individual‘s vocational goal.

Furthermore, individuals who attend a CTP are also subject to the same requirements as traditional students, including, but not limited to:

1. Participation in Counseling and Guidance
2. Annual completion of the FAFSA
3. Adherence to the Standards for VR Sponsorship in Post-Secondary Education [(*MDRS-VR-PSED-01*)](https://powerdms.com/link/Mis6361/document/?id=3027305) (with exception of the GPA and full-time status requirements)
4. Costs as published in the Fee Schedule

When planning the CTP services, the counselor shall plan *Training: Comprehensive Transition PSED Program* and customize the description to indicate tuition and fees for the CTP. The counselor shall also plan *Training: Comprehensive Transition PSED Program* and customize the description to indicate books and related supplies for the CTP. Finally, as a foundation to independent living, CTP students are required to live on campus if housing is offered, therefore the counselor should plan *Maintenance: Training Related* and tailor the description to specify the exact assistance to be provided (i.e., dorm fee and/or meal plan).

The counselor plays a significant role in not only planning for CTP services, but also for facilitating the individual’s successful participation in the program. Each semester, the counselor and the individual should review the CTP’s curriculum to ensure it continues to support the individual’s chosen employment goal. Also, each semester, the individual and/or institution is to submit to the counselor a mid-term and final grade report detailing the individual’s progress. The counselor should review the grade report with the individual, their parent/legal guardian, and/or CTP Coordinator to determine what benefits the individual is receiving, what improvements or enhancements can and should be made to the individual’s current curriculum, and/or if participation in the CTP should continue.

#### 13.7.6.2 Authorizing for CTP Services

Authorizations for a CTP’s tuition and fees should be issued to the educational institution using the same service category as stated on the plan (*Training: Comprehensive Transition PSED Program).* Authorizations for dorm fees and/or meal plans should also be issued to the educational institution using the same service category as the plan (*Maintenance: Training Related*) and the procedure codes: *SN00084 –Dormitory and/or SN00085 – Meals.*

Authorizations for books and supplies will be issued to a vendor of the individual’s choice using the service category stated on the IPE: *Training: Comprehensive Transition PSED Program.*

*Exceptions to the guidelines outlined in this section may be granted on a case-by-case basis, provided the individual's unique circumstances warrant such deviation. A written justification by the OVR/OVRB counselor and approval from the OVR district manager, OVRB regional manager or PSED Program Coordinator will be required.*

### 13.7.7 Tutoring

Tutoring may be provided to an individual enrolled in post-secondary education. OVR/OVRB will not fund tutoring as a general academic support so that an individual can maintain an above average grade point average. See [Fee Schedule](https://mdrsmsgov.sharepoint.com/sites/OVR/Fee%20Schedule/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FOVR%2FFee%20Schedule%2FSupport%20Services%20Rev%2E%202022%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FOVR%2FFee%20Schedule) for further instructions.

### 13.7.8 Delay of Graduation/Completion

A number of factors may contribute to a delay in graduation from the time frame established on the IPE. These include illness, change of major, patterns of withdrawal from classes, unavailability of courses and other factors. The OVR/OVRB counselor and student will be able to minimize delays in completion of the program by carefully reviewing the course requirements and the individual’s progress each semester, revisiting the employment goal, and assuring that disability supports are in place (see Section XXXX).

## 13.8 Requirement to Apply for Financial Assistance

According to federal VR regulations, training and related services in institutions of post-secondary education (including universities, colleges, community/junior colleges, vocational schools, technical institutes and proprietary/private career schools) for eligible individuals under an IPE will be purchased only after the individual has completed the application process for financial aid through the institution’s financial aid office and has applied for other grants and scholarships for which the individual might qualify. Application for financial assistance from other sources, including grants and scholarships, must be made annually.

Students and families may choose to take out educational loans or participate in work-study programs to help defray educational costs.

Individuals are not required to complete the financial aid application process through the institution’s financial aid office if:

1. The individual is seeking admittance to an institution not participating in the federal student financial aid process (this requires Client Services Director approval); or
2. The individual is enrolling for non-degree courses (i.e., selected courses that are not part of a degree program)

## 13.9 Determination of OVR/OVRB Funding

1. OVR/OVRB funding for certificate programs or associate of arts (AA) programs shall be at the rate of the in-state community college attended, as applicable (see [Fee Schedule](https://mdrsmsgov.sharepoint.com/sites/OVR/Fee%20Schedule/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FOVR%2FFee%20Schedule%2FCommunity%20Junior%20College%20Fees%202024%2D2025%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FOVR%2FFee%20Schedule)). Exceptions to pay in excess of the cost of tuition and mandatory fees are subject to regional management review.
2. If an individual elects to begin their postsecondary education at a four-year university, OVR/OVRB may sponsor their attendance at the four-year institution at a rate not to exceed the highest in-state community college rate for the first 60 credit hours, provided the chosen program aligns with the individual’s employment goal and is determined necessary to achieve that goal.
3. OVR/OVRB funding for four-year colleges, after the first 60 credit hours, shall be at the rate of the in-state **public** college/university attended, if applicable (see [Fee Schedule](https://mdrsmsgov.sharepoint.com/sites/OVR/Fee%20Schedule/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FOVR%2FFee%20Schedule%2FState%20Universities%20Fees%202024%2D2025%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FOVR%2FFee%20Schedule)). Funding for private or out-of-state post-secondary institutions may not exceed the cost of the highest in-state public college/university. *An exception to provide funding for tuition and fees in excess of the in-state rates for private or out-of-state institutions requires approval of the Client Services Director or designee.*

*Exceptions to the guidelines outlined in this section may be granted on a case-by-case basis, provided the individual's unique circumstances warrant such deviation. A written justification by the OVR/OVRB counselor and approval from the Client Services Director will be required.*

## 13.10 Study Abroad

It is expected practice that training be provided at institutions located within the United States. However, exceptions may be considered if all the following conditions are met:

1. The individual is enrolled in a program located in the United States, which requires study abroad to satisfy degree requirements for graduation.
2. The study abroad does not lengthen the total program.
3. Individuals maintain full-time student status while studying abroad, and
4. Individuals are in good academic standing.

If all four (4) conditions are met, the agency may provide financial assistance only up to the amount normally authorized for training (i.e. tuition, housing, and meals) in the United States. Comparable benefits shall be applied. Approval by the Client Services Director is required. **NOTE: The cost of travel for study outside the country is the responsibility of the individual.**

*Exceptions to the guidelines outlined in this section may be granted on a case-by-case basis, provided the individual's unique circumstances warrant such deviation. A written justification by the OVR/OVRB counselor and approval from the Client Services Director will be required.*

## 13.11 PSED for Students with an Alternate Diploma

The Alternate Diploma is an option for students with significant cognitive disabilities exiting high school. The Alternate Diploma is not equivalent to a traditional high school diploma and is not recognized by post-secondary entities that require a traditional high school diploma for admission.

However, the counselor should consider the individual for PSED if it is determined that such training can assist with helping to achieve a more suitable employment goal and the individual can provide:

1. Proof of the Alternate Diploma that was received at exit from high school, and
2. Documentation that the individual has applied to and has been accepted into an accredited institution that will facilitate the training.

Students who have earned an Alternate Diploma may not be eligible for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) under traditional criteria. However, these students may still qualify for federal financial aid through the Ability to Benefit (ATB) process, provided they can demonstrate their ability to benefit and succeed in postsecondary education or training.

The ATB program allows individuals who do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent to qualify for federal financial aid if they are enrolled in a recognized career pathway program, such as the Mississippi Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (MIBEST) program located at the community colleges. To be eligible for ATB, the student shall meet one of the following criteria:

1. Successfully complete six (6) college credits toward a degree-seeking program; or
2. Pass an ATB exam approved by the U.S. Department of Education, administered by a community college or career school; or
3. Complete a State Plan program approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

As a result, students with an Alternate Diploma are not required to complete the FAFSA unless they are enrolled in a Career Pathway program that incorporates the ATB process.

For further information or to determine eligibility for the ATB program, students should contact the institution’s Adult Education Director or the College and Career Navigator.

*Alternate Diploma Exception: If an individual with an Alternate Diploma demonstrates aptitude and motivation for further training or education through alternative assessments or preparatory programs, they may receive consideration for PSED services. A written justification by the OVR/OVRB counselor and approval from the OVR district manager, OVRB regional manager or PSED Program Coordinator will be required.*

## 13.12 Role of the OVR/OVRB Counselor

Following are essential aspects of the OVR/OVRB counselor’s role related to vocational, college, and other training services.

1. Provide affective career exploration and counseling to support the client’s informed choice about the employment goal, services and providers. Assist the individual in thoroughly exploring the pros and cons of employment options for consideration.
2. Determine if AT is needed for the individual to have access to post-secondary education. While the post-secondary institution has the responsibility to provide in-class accommodations (see h(1) below), OVR/OVRB may provide AT needed by the individual outside of the classroom setting. If consultation is needed with MDRS Assistive Technology (AT) regarding AT for a student, be sure to contact AT 90 days prior to the beginning of the semester.
3. Work cooperatively with the financial aid administrator, the coordinator of disability services, the individual student and, as appropriate, the individual’s family or authorized representative to determine the amount of OVR/OVRB financial participation, assessing progress in the educational program and assessing progress toward the employment goal.
4. Be sure that supports are in place and are included on the IPE (e.g., continuation of therapy and/or medication) to address disability issues and assist the individual in maintaining stability so that they have the best chance for academic success. e.
5. Clarify disability-related needs that can be anticipated in the post-secondary education setting:
6. Discuss the role of the Disability Services Coordinator at the post-secondary education institution. Be sure that the individual understands that it is the responsibility of the Disability Services Coordinator to arrange required reasonable in-class accommodations/access to course content at the school based on federal law and regulation and the policies and procedures of the institution. Also, the individual should be advised that "in-class" accommodations appropriate in a college/university setting might be different than those provided during high school. Encourage the individual to contact the Disability Services Coordinator.
7. Anticipate needs for out-of-class accommodations (e.g., a reader to assist with studying), discuss OVR/OVRB’s responsibility to provide such supports, and include them as appropriate in the IPE.
8. Advise the individual of the required procedures and responsibilities related to OVR/OVRB support for post-secondary education. The Standards for VR Sponsorship for Post-Secondary Education ([*MDRS-VR- PSED-01*](https://powerdms.com/link/Mis6361/document/?id=3027305)) shall be provided to augment discussion of this information.
9. Determine OVR/OVRB financial assistance according to relevant policy and procedures. (See Section 5)
10. Meet with the individual prior to each semester to:
11. Review grades and progress toward the agreed upon certificate/degree.
12. Plan coursework and address any required prerequisites, remedial courses, repeated courses, withdrawals, and "incompletes," and assure that the student completes related requirements so as to not delay completion of the certificate/degree.
13. Discuss disability issues and facilitate provision of supports and reasonable accommodations needed and/or continuation of those which are in place.
14. Emphasize the employment outcome on the IPE.
15. Offer support and encourage self-advocacy
16. With the student, annually review the IPE, considering all relevant factors, including whether or not:
17. The employment goal is still viable.
18. Timeframes on the IPE are being met.
19. Disability-related supports are in place and adequate.
20. There is a need for an IPE Amendment.

All annual reviews for post-secondary education require management review to be documented via an AWARE™ case note.

## 13.13 Notification of Responsibilities of the Individual

The OVR/OVRB counselor shall inform individuals of the following responsibilities and shall advise them that failure to fulfill these responsibilities will result in denial or discontinuation of OVR/OVRB funding.

### 13.13.1 Related Policies and Procedures

The OVR/OVRB counselor will advise the individual of the policies and procedures relevant to the financial participation by the individual and OVR/OVRB in the cost of training and related services in post-secondary education institutions.

### 13.13.2 Requirements and Responsibilities of the Individual

When the IPE is developed for PSED services, the OVR/OVRB counselor shall inform the individual of the following requirements and responsibilities, which are included on the Standards for VR Sponsorship for Post-Secondary Education ([*MDRS-VR- PSED-01*](https://powerdms.com/link/Mis6361/document/?id=3027305)):

1. Apply annually for financial assistance through the post-secondary institution within established time frames in order to be considered for OVR/OVRB financial assistance. (OVR/OVRB financial assistance for an individual who has not met required deadlines for applying for financial aid requires supervisory approval.)
2. When arranging to begin a program at a post-secondary institution, provide the OVR/OVRB counselor with a Letter of Acceptance and proposed course of study at least 60 days prior to the beginning of the semester/grading period so that there is sufficient time to plan and determine whether and to what extent OVR/OVRB can provide financial assistance.

While OVR/OVRB staff will make every effort to assist individuals who request services less than 60 days prior to the beginning of the semester/grading period, OVR/OVRB financial assistance may be delayed until the next semester/grading period for last-minute requests.

1. Maintain satisfactory academic progress toward a degree or certificate program by remaining in "good standing" with the post-secondary institution and achieving a grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.0 on a 4.0 scale per semester, or higher if required by the program. To confirm and document progress, provide the OVR/OVRB counselor with a copy of the grade report or transcript and proposed course of study upon the completion of each semester/grading period. Grade reports are **required at least 15 days following the last day of the semester.** **Failure to submit grade reports will result in the counselor being unable to authorize for the next semester. Any fees incurred as a result of the individual not submitting their grade reports are the responsibility of the individual.**

The grade reports can be printed from the individual’s school account and given to the counselor. Screenshots of grades will be accepted if they show the school’s name, individual’s name, class list, grade per class, and the GPA.

1. Apply any financial assistance (other than loans) received toward training and related expenses.
2. Participate in the cost of training and related services in institutions of post-secondary education, when educational expenses exceed financial assistance received from OVR/OVRB and other sources.
3. Prior to each semester/grading period, discuss the proposed course of study and its relationship to the employment goal, and progress toward the certificate/degree with the OVR/OVRB counselor.
4. Discuss with the OVR/OVRB counselor any requested change in major or course of study, considering the impact on the employment goal, any required extension in the academic program, and whether the IPE would need to be amended.
5. Register and work/meet with the DSS Coordinator for your respective school each semester to request accommodations and secure tutoring services if needed.

To ensure continued progress is made toward meeting their PSED goals, students should strive to obtain the appropriate Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) in a timely manner (see section 13.19 for further information).

Payment of any fees charged for dropping a course will be the individual’s responsibility.

*Exceptions: Every effort should be made to assist a student with a commitment to a full-time schedule. However, there may be circumstances, including medical or psychological issues, which prevent an individual with a disability from taking the required number of hours. Individual exceptions for disability accommodations and special circumstances may be considered on a semester-by-semester basis. Any exceptions made to the standards require written justification by the OVR/OVRB counselor and approval of the OVR district manager or OVRB regional manager.*

### 13.13.3 Length of Training

The individual is expected to be progressively working toward the completion of his/her PSED program, which is consistent with the employment goal on his/her IPE. The length of the training program should not exceed that which is identified in the IPE. Students shall supply the counselor with a list of the curriculum (courses) required for the degree program they have chosen so the counselor can monitor that successful progress is being made.

Most programs at community colleges take two (2) years and programs at universities take four (4) years to complete if attending school on a full-time basis.

The customary attendance period can only be exceeded with documentation of the reason for the extension and approval by the manager or his/her designee. The reason for exceeding the customary attendance period should be documented in a case note.

**NOTE: An individual is eligible for the Pell Grant for a total of six (6) years when attending school as a full-time student. Time will be prorated for an individual not attending as a full-time student.**

*Length of Training Exception: If the customary attendance period exceeds typical durations due to disability-related needs, extenuating personal circumstances, or other valid reasons, an exception may be approved with proper documentation and approval by the OVR district manager or OVRB regional manager.*

### 13.13.5 Probationary Period

When a student fails to pass the required number of hours and/or earns below a 2.0, the counselor shall intensively work with him/her to identify the cause for the difficulty and plan for any required services that will help the individual succeed. This includes requiring any student who is on academic probation to contact Disability Support Services (DSS) and review assistance options. Counselors may assist the student in speaking with DSS if needed. Counselors shall also document (in case notes) they informed the student of this requirement, and they should document the outcome of the student’s meeting with DSS.

*Exceptions to the guidelines outlined in this section may be granted on a case-by-case basis, provided the individual's unique circumstances warrant such deviation. A written justification by the OVR/OVRB counselor and approval from the OVR district manager, OVRB regional manager or PSED Program Coordinator will be required.*

## 13.14 Liaison Counselors/ Case Transfer

A designated OVR/OVRB counselor is assigned as a liaison for each public PSED institution in the state. This includes all eight (8) public universities and all fifteen (15) community/junior colleges. The liaison counselor works closely with his/her designated school’s Office of Financial Aid and Disability Support Services. To determine the name of a specific institution’s liaison counselor, contact the district manager over the county where the institution is located.

The following is a list of general objectives that the liaison counselor shall meet for the university for which they are assigned:

* Contact Financial Aid Staff each semester.
* Provide training for appropriate staff regarding VR procedures regarding payment of fees.
* Promote open communication regarding the cooperative agreement. All parties should exchange information concerning students promptly and openly. The Financial Aid Transmittal Form or a printout from the student’s account is used for this purpose; and
* Establish joint training for an exchange of program information between and among cooperating agencies.

An individual's case shall be transferred to the liaison counselor only if he/she needs ongoing (other than academic) VR services while attending school. Otherwise, the individual's case is to be kept by the counselor serving his/her county.

Additionally, if a student is to receive support services through an agency contract with a university’s Disability Support Services, his/her case is to be transferred to the appropriate liaison counselor.

Before a case is transferred, the IPE should be developed and the individual’s responsibilities explained to him/her. The case is to be sent to the liaison counselor at least one month prior to the start of school to allow time for him/her to issue all required authorizations. The case should be reviewed for correctness and should be complete upon transfer.

## 13.15 Support Services

Disability Support Services (DSS) offices are located on the campuses of colleges and universities. These offices have trained staff who are there to help students with disabilities meet challenges and barriers to their education. Counselors should encourage each individual receiving OVR/OVRB PSED sponsorship to register with his/her institution’s DSS office and document the conversation in case notes. Although the school has the primary responsibility for ensuring a student is allowed full participation in the class, the counselor should work closely with DSS at the school to be certain the individual receives the assistance he/she needs to be successful. Typically, the school would be responsible for anything which would make the class accessible (i.e., textbooks, handouts, alternate testing methods, etc.). However, exceptions may be made for services such as interpreters. Specific support services to be provided by OVR/OVRB should be included on the individual's IPE.

Long range planning is critical in ensuring sufficient time is allowed so that materials (textbooks in braille, on computer, etc.) or other special services the individual needs are ready and available at the beginning of each semester.

Documentation for payment of support services should be submitted monthly on a Support Service Log *(MDRS-VR-*[*PSED*](https://powerdms.com/link/Mis6361/document/?id=2001576)*-02)* along with a copy of the authorization. It should show the number of hours per day that services are provided, the specific course for which assistance is being provided, and be signed by both the student and provider of the services. In cases where service provision is arranged by the school, an official representative of the school should also sign the form. The hourly rate paid to the provider of the services is outlined in the agency Fee Schedule. The MDRS-VR-PSED-02 (which includes the individual’s signature) is to be attached to the authorization when sent to Finance for payment.

**NOTE: The individual is expected to inform the counselor and the school of the need for support services prior to receiving the service. If this does not happen, the individual shall be prepared to cover any expenses him/herself**.

*Exceptions: Individual exceptions for disability accommodation and special circumstances may be considered on a semester-by-semester basis. Any exceptions made to these, or any other guidelines, require written justification by the counselor and approval by the OVR District Manager or OVRB Regional Manager.*

## 13.16 Examples of PSED Support Services:

### 13.16.1 Assistive Technology Services

An Assistive Technology assessment shall be considered for any individual with obstacles identified that will require a specific support service(s) to successfully complete his/her course of study. This will enable the individual and counselor to consider the most effective and cost-efficient method to assist the individual. In some cases, it may be more effective and less costly to purchase a piece of adaptive equipment to assist the individual than to pay for individual services (e.g., readers). When purchasing adaptive equipment, the general policy of the agency is to assist with those necessary devices that are personal in nature and would be kept by the individual. Items that make the classroom accessible are considered the school's responsibility.

### 13.16.2 Tutorial Services

Agency sponsored tutorial services are the provision of any tutorial hours above those provided at no cost by the institution to all students. Agency-sponsored tutorial services will consist of a person working one-on-one with the individual to explain specific portions of the coursework which the individual is having difficulty understanding. It should not constitute re-teaching the entire class. Tutoring shall be provided by a person who is taking or has completed the course, demonstrates a knowledge of the material, is able to communicate this knowledge effectively, and is approved (either verbally or in writing) by an official representative of the institution. Up to (twenty) 20 hours of tutorial services per month may be authorized based on the individual's disability and the nature and content of the courses being taken. (See [*Fee Schedule*](https://powerdms.com/link/Mis6361/document/?id=2573286) for the allowed hourly rate.)

**NOTE: To ensure the use of comparable benefits and services, counselors should assist the student in contacting DSS to see if tutors are available at no cost prior to authorizing tutorial services.**

### 13.16.3 Reader Services

Reader services mean a literate, intelligible (plain-speaking) individual reading to the visually impaired printed material which is not available in an accessible format (braille, large print, audio recording, etc.). OVR/OVRB may assist with up to (forty) 40 hours of reader services per month as needed. Individual needs and differences, including the nature and content of the coursework, should be considered in planning reader services. The school will locate, hire, and pay the reader. OVR/OVRB shall reimburse at the rate established in the Fee Schedule for classroom activities or other hours directly associated with academic studies.

### 13.16.4 Note Taker Services

Class notes may be obtained through various methods: provision of copies by the professor, use of augmentative devices (i.e., audio recorders), or accessing copies from a classmate. If these methods are not available, the agency may assist in paying for note taker services up to the actual number of hours in the classroom at a rate not to exceed the established hourly rate in the Fee Schedule.

### 13.16.5 Interpreter Services (Sign or Native Language)

Interpreter services are limited to the actual number of hours in the classroom or in planned tutorial sessions and shall be provided by a qualified interpreter. A qualified interpreter is an individual who is proficient enough in the individual's primary language and knowledgeable enough in the course terminology to communicate the presented information effectively (in an understandable manner) to the individual. Proficiency may be demonstrated by the QA or certification level of the interpreter and the student's acknowledgment that he/she understands the interpreter. The school will locate, hire, and pay the interpreter. OVR/OVRB will reimburse at half the rate established in the Fee Schedule for classroom activities if the interpreter possesses at least a QA Level II and is registered with the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) at the time he/she is hired for interpreting services. To receive the maximum reimbursement amount, the school will need to provide the counselor with proof of the interpreter’s QA level and ODHH registration.

### 13.16.6 Personal Assistant Services

Personal Assistant Services (PAS) may be provided to eligible individuals when such services are essential for participating in approved post-secondary education or training as outlined in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Clients receiving PAS are responsible for selecting, hiring, and supervising their personal assistant(s). They shall also provide orientation and training tailored to their specific needs and academic requirements. To maintain service eligibility, clients are required to submit monthly documentation detailing the services received, including the hours worked and tasks performed.

Counselors play a critical role in supporting individuals by collaborating with them to assess PAS needs related to their employment goal identified on their IPE. Counselors also provide guidance on available PAS resources, such as independent living centers or home health agencies. If a personal assistant is not already registered as a vendor, counselors assist in establishing them as a vendor.

PAS shall be directly related to the individual’s participation in post-secondary education or training and can only be provided if no comparable benefits are available through other resources. Funding for PAS is limited to the duration of the educational or training program. Before PAS is provided, assistive technology and alternative methods for independent task performance should be explored.

### 13.16.7 Other Technical Assistance Services

These services consist of any other special assistance needed to help the individual successfully complete the course of study (e.g., locating library research materials for individuals who are blind and/or transcribing technical data into braille, large print, computer format, etc.). Up to 10 (ten) hours of other technical assistance services per month may be authorized as needed at the hourly rate indicated in the Fee Schedule.

### 13.16.8 Contract with the Public University Student Support Services

The agency contracts with a public university to recruit, select, train, and compensate personal care attendants, readers, tutors, etc. for those individuals in need of such support services. Services are provided in accordance with the contract between the agency and the public university. The Support Service Log ([*MDRS-VR-PSED-02)*](https://powerdms.com/link/Mis6361/document/?id=2001576)  is not needed for services covered under this contract.

## 13.17 Guidelines for Payment

### 13.17.1 Comparable Benefits for PSED

PSED expenses shall be itemized on the IPE and appropriate comparable benefits applied to the costs. These benefits include Federal Pell Grants, other grants, and non-merit scholarships.

All individuals requesting OVR/OVRB assistance with PSED costs shall make maximum efforts to secure assistance from other sources, including financial aid through the financial aid office of the institution he/she plans to attend and by applying for federal student aid. To determine the individual’s eligibility for federal financial aid, the individual shall apply for and complete the FAFSA. The FAFSA should be submitted as soon after January 1 as possible. Individuals can apply online through the FAFSA website at <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>. Even if an individual has applied for and been denied a grant previously, the individual shall reapply each year. Proof of application shall be obtained by the counselor annually and filed in the individual’s service record. Individuals who fail to apply for or refuse to accept financial assistance for which they are eligible are ineligible for any OVR/OVRB financial assistance.

***NOTE****: For FAFSA the deadline is usually June 30th, for HELP the deadline is usually March 31st, for MTAG and SEOG the deadline is usually September 15th.*

All funds the student receives for the cost of PSED, which do not have to be repaid, are considered comparable benefits. Student loans, work-study, and scholarships awarded based on merit are not.

To help in distinguishing between merit and non-merit scholarships, refer to the following definitions:

### 13.17.2 Merit Scholarships

Merit Scholarships are competitive scholarships awarded based on an individual’s achievement. The student shall demonstrate an exceptional level of performance in academics, athletics, or other personal fields to qualify for a merit scholarship. This type of scholarship is not considered a Comparable Benefit.

*Reference: CFR 361.5 (C)(8)(ii)*

### 13.17.3 Non-Merit Grants/Scholarships

Non-Merit Grants/Scholarships are grants/scholarships awarded based upon non-academic criteria and are often based on the student’s financial need. These types of grants/scholarships do not have to be repaid (e.g., Pell Grant, MTAG, HELP, SEOG). Therefore, they are counted as a Comparable Benefit.

Furthermore, to aid in determining that all available comparable benefits are being used, the counselor should obtain a printout from the student’s account that includes the student’s name and award information. Or the counselor can submit to the financial aid office the Financial Aid Transmittal Document [*(MDRS-VR-35)*](https://powerdms.com/link/Mis6361/document/?id=2001574)with Part I completed and signed by the individual. If the institution accepts the Transmittal, the school will complete Part II of the form and return it to the counselor. The counselor will then complete Part III and send the original form back to the financial aid office while keeping a copy for the individual’s service record. If a counselor is unable to distinguish the difference between merit and non-merit scholarships awarded to the student, he/she should contact the school’s financial aid office and obtain a verbal description of the scholarship. Any information gained (in writing or verbally) shall be filed/documented in the individual’s service record and a case note entered in AWARE™.

*NOTE: The Mississippi Affordable College Savings (MACS) and the Mississippi Pre-Paid Affordable College Tuition (MPACT) plans are prepaid tuition services that provide a secure and affordable way for families to save for their children's higher education. Since participation is voluntary and not based on merit, these plans are counted as Comparable Benefits.*

### 13.17.4 Authorizations and Comparable Benefits

Counselors are to authorize to the institution for payment of tuition, dorm, books, and other expenses identified in the IPE well in advance of the registration date. If the enrollment deadline requires authorization prior to the student receiving notification of the grant award, the counselor may do so if the student's service record contains evidence of grant application.

Counselors should not process the authorization for payment until the agency receives notification of the grant award. Once this is received, the agency will then pay, amend, or cancel the authorization based upon the amount of grant awarded to the student less any comparable benefits.

Should the entire cost of a planned service be paid by a comparable benefit, the counselor shall complete an Actual Service data page to ensure the service provision is documented in the service record.

**NOTE**: Counselors should not supplement any comparable benefits more than the actual costs for tuition, housing, and books. If the amount of the individual's financial aid (determined to be comparable benefits) exceeds these costs, the agency will pay nothing toward these services.

All funds authorized for PSED, and training programs shall be used for their intended purpose.

### 13.17.5 Payment of Services at In-State Public PSED Institutions/Schools

1. Academic, Career, or Technical Training - If an individual elects to begin their postsecondary education at a four-year university, OVR/OVRB may sponsor their attendance at the four-year institution at a rate not to exceed the highest in-state community college rate for the first 60 credit hours, provided the chosen program aligns with the individual’s employment goal and is determined necessary to achieve that goal. OVR/OVRB funding for four-year colleges, after the first 60 credit hours, shall be at the rate of the in-state public college/university attended, if applicable (see Fee Schedule). Funding for private or out-of-state post-secondary institutions may not exceed the cost of the highest in-state rate for a public college/university. An exception to provide funding for tuition and fees in excess of the the highest public college/university in-state rates for private or out-of-state institutions requires approval of the Client Services Director or designee. (Approved fees provided by the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning and the Office of Community and Junior College Relations will be updated in the Fee Schedule annually.) (See Section 13.9)
2. Books, Supplies, and Other Training Related Expenses – Training books, tools, and other materials which are required for the successful completion of a training program/course may be provided. These expenses will be paid at actual cost and may include, but are not limited to, books, audio supplies, uniforms, drafting supplies, special software, etc. However, to authorize and pay for supplies beyond textbooks (e.g., art supplies, scientific calculator, etc.), counselors shall obtain a copy of the course syllabus from the student verifying the items are required.

Ordinary expendable supplies such as notebooks, pens/pencils, binders, backpacks, and printer paper or ink cartridges may be purchased if required and/or justified for the successful completion of the program.

Computers and related equipment (printer, software, etc.) that are needed for **educational purposes only** do not require a recommendation from Assistive Technology (AT). Please see the Fee Schedule for computer cost allowance. If a student wishes to purchase a computer from somewhere other than his/her campus bookstore, quotes from a minimum of two (2) vendors will be required to ensure a cost-effective purchase. Subsequently, if the chosen vendor is not already listed in AACE, the counselor will need to obtain a completed W-9 form from the company and send a Vendor Addition Request to vendorrequest@mdrs.ms.gov. After the chosen vendor has been added in AACE, the counselor will notify them of the requirement to register for electronic payments through the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA).

The OVR/OVRB Counselor shall consider the provision, upgrade, or replacement of computer hardware and software if the following conditions are met: (a) the equipment is essential to compensate for the limitations caused by the disability or is required for the eligible individual to achieve or maintain a vocational objective of competitive integrated employment; and (b) the following criteria is satisfied: the equipment is necessary to participate in a postsecondary or vocational training program.

Computers and related equipment that **are** needed to accommodate an individual’s disability require a referral to Assistive Technology (AT).

Additionally, counselors shall ensure that any individual for whom a computer or related equipment is purchased is fully aware that OVR/OVRB will not replace items that are damaged, lost, or stolen due to the misuse or negligence of the individual.

*Exceptions to the guidelines outlined in this section may be granted on a case-by-case basis, provided the individual's unique circumstances warrant such deviation. A written justification by the OVR/OVRB counselor and approval from the OVR district manager, OVRB regional manager or PSED Program Coordinator will be required.*

1. Maintenance – Maintenance services are when the agency provides monetary support to an individual for expenses (e.g., food, shelter, clothing) that are in excess of their normal living expenses necessitated by their participation in an assessment for determining eligibility, scope of VR needs and the receipt of VR services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Examples of maintenance include but are not limited to:
2. Housing – Individuals may receive assistance with housing when living on campus only. All payments should be issued directly to the institution (less comparable benefits) but **only up to the dorm fee listed in the agency Fee Schedule for the institution the individual attends.**

Individual exceptions for disability accommodations and special circumstances may be considered on a semester-by-semester basis. Any exceptions made to these guidelines for payment require a written justification (case note) by the counselor for service record documentation and shall be approved by his/her manager and/or the PSED Program Coordinator.

1. Transportation - Day Students – Before assisting with transportation cost, counselors shall ensure a copy of the student’s class schedule is in the service record. The student shall reside 60 miles (one-way) or more from the institution to receive transportation assistance. Counselors should authorize the cost of transportation monthly at the current state rate less comparable benefits. The student shall maintain a travel log to document the number of days he/she travels each month and provide it to his/her counselor along with the signed authorization. When the travel log is turned in (and before payment is made), the counselor shall write a case note documenting the dates of travel correspond to the student’s class schedule. If a student claims travel for a date they did not attend class (i.e., going to the library to complete an assignment), this cannot be paid.

Counselors shall pay for transportation based on the number of miles (round trip) the individual actually travels to school. **The cost of travel each semester *cannot* exceed the cost of dorms per semester at the school the individual attends.**

1. Meals – The agency may assist students (on campus and/or off campus) with a meal plan purchased up to the amount allowed in the Fee Schedule or the actual cost of the meal plan, whichever is less. **The authorization for meals will be issued directly to the school.** In the event a student has disability-related dietary restrictions, counselors should direct him/her to DSS to request dietary accommodations.

***Exceptions:*** *If, due to disability or special circumstance, an individual needs modification to the aforementioned guidelines, the counselor shall submit a written justification (case note) to his/her manager for approval before planning and/or authorizing for the service.*

### 13.17.5 Payment of Services at Private or Out-of-State PSED Institutions/Schools

Students who prefer to attend private or out-of-state institutions of post-secondary education are responsible for the extra costs of attendance, including but not limited to transportation costs over and above what OVR/OVRB would provide if the individual were to attend a local college/university. However, out-of-state attendance may be considered in specific circumstances where it is better to meet the unique needs of the individual.

OVR/OVRB may provide financial assistance, as follows:

1. **Tuition and Fees** – If an individual elects to begin their postsecondary education at an out-of-state four-year institution, OVR/OVRB may sponsor their attendance at the four-year institution at a rate not to exceed the highest in-state community college rate for the first 60 credit hours, provided the chosen program aligns with the individual’s employment goal and is determined necessary to achieve that goal.

OVR/OVRB funding for out-of-state four-year institutions, after the first 60 credit hours, shall not exceed the rate of the highest public in-state college/univerity rates. An exception to provide funding for tuition and fees in excess of the highest public in-state college/university rates for private or out-of-state institutions requires approval of the Client Services Director or designee.

1. **Room and Board** – OVR/OVRB support for room and board at a private or out-of-state institution will follow the same guidelines as tuition and fees. For the first 60 credit hours, support shall not exceed the highest in-state community college rate. After the first 60 credit hours, funding shall not exceed the highest public in-state college/university rates. Any exception to provide OVR/OVRB funding for room and board in excess of these rates requires prior approval of the Client Services Director or designee.

If a student opts for an out-of-state service that is more expensive than an in-state service capable of meeting their rehabilitation needs, OVR/OVRB will not cover the additional costs. However, when in-state options cannot meet the individual's rehabilitation needs to the same extent as an out-of-state program, OVR/OVRB may cover the additional costs of the out-of-state service. For instance, attendance at a reputable out-of-state program may significantly enhance the individual's ability to achieve successful employment outcomes, particularly if the program offers unique training, certifications, or industry-recognized qualifications not available in-state. Additionally, acceptance into a prestigious out-of-state college or university recognized as a recruitment source for positions in renowned industries or businesses with high-quality career pathways may justify providing support for such an institution. In these cases, the decision to support out-of-state attendance will be made with the goal of ensuring the best possible outcome for the individual's career and employment objectives.

**Examples:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.
 | **7000** | **5000** | **1200** | **3800** |
|  | Institution’s Tuition | Max In-State Tuition | Comparable Benefits | Agency Pays |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  **2.** | **3500** | **2900** | **500** | **2400** |
|  | Institution’s Dorm | Max In-State Dorm | Comparable Benefits | Agency Pays |

**NOTE**: Mississippi is a part of the Southern Regional Education Board (a sixteen southern states interstate compact) that may provide financial assistance to individuals attending out-of-state programs in one of the member states if that particular curriculum is not available in the state where the student resides. To request student financial assistance under this contract, contact the Director of Student Affairs at Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, at [www.sreb.org](http://www.sreb.org).

Gallaudet University and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) - These are the only national, fully accessible post-secondary institutions for the Deaf. They are funded by federal legislative appropriations. Gallaudet is a liberal arts college located in Washington, D. C. NTID is a technical school located at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, NY. There are no comparable institutions in the State. The agency will treat them as it does an in-state university. The agency will pay the actual costs of tuition, dorm, and books less comparable benefits/individual participation.

The agency will pay for one (1) round trip airline ticket per semester for travel to Gallaudet and NTID from the individual’s home. To secure airline travel for an individual, the counselor shall reach out to the Executive Director’s Administrative Assistant who will book the flight. If an individual wishes to return home during school breaks, it will be at his/her own expense. Gallaudet requires students to have health insurance. Therefore, the agency will pay the cost of the university health insurance in those instances where an individual does not have private insurance. Furthermore, the agency will cover the full cost of meals for students attending these schools. The guidelines listed under In-State Public Institutions are to be applied to all other fees (i.e., off campus housing, meals, etc.).

### 13.17.6 Non-Semester Programs

All in-state, public institutions operate on a semester schedule. To determine the allowable costs for programs that operate on a different schedule (quarter, trimester, etc.), the following procedure should be followed:

1. Divide the maximum allowable in-state fee by 16 (number of weeks in a semester) to get a weekly rate.
2. Multiply this weekly rate by the number of weeks in the private or out-of-state program to get the amount allowed for the quarter, trimester, etc.

### 13.17.8 Summer School

Unless State Office advises otherwise by May 1 each year, summer classes will be allowed if required for the individual’s degree plan and tuition will be paid at the institution’s actual cost. The guidelines on the Standards for VR Sponsorship for Post-Secondary Education (MDRS-VR-PSED-01) apply to summer in the manner they apply to fall and spring semesters with the exception that six (6), rather than twelve (12) hours are required. Six hours is defined as six hours across all summer sessions. *See Fee Schedule for the allowable amount for summer housing and meals.*

### 13.17.9 Distance/Online Learning

An individual may be sponsored in a distance-learning program including correspondence courses, internet-based curriculums, or computer-based tutorials if it is approved by the Department of Education within the state in which it operates.

The agency will not consider programs in which the entire package or curriculum shall be purchased initially. The PSED Program Coordinator will assist in determining the course's approval status. Approved in-state fees for a comparable program (community or senior college) **shall not** be exceeded.

If an individual chooses to attend online classes offered at an in-state public institution to obtain an academic degreeor career/technical certification, the same guidelines that pertain to on campus students apply.

*Exceptions to the guidelines outlined in this section may be granted on a case-by-case basis, provided the individual's unique circumstances warrant such deviation. A written justification by the OVR/OVRB counselor and approval from the district manager, OVRB regional manager or PSED Program Coordinator will be required.*

## 13.18 Authorizing for Postsecondary Training

For federal reporting purposes, it is important to use the correct service category and/or procedure code when authorizing for PSED training. See [*Fee Schedule*](https://powerdms.com/link/Mis6361/document/?id=2883381) for the correct categories and/or codes.

## 13.19 Educational Goals, Measurable Skill Gains, and Credential Attainment in PSED

Measurable Skill Gains (MSGs) and credentials attained by individuals served in the VR program shall be reported to RSA. A measurable skill gain (MSG) is progress an individual is making in an education or training program that is leading to a credential or employment. Documentation is to be completed as MSGs occur and shall be verifiable through supporting documentation. To report this information accurately for individuals receiving assistance with PSED or training, the individuals shall have an active educational goal.

Educational goals are documented on the Educational Goal page in AACE as follows:

 **Section 1.**



When selecting an educational goal for individuals in high school, the counselor will choose the grade level the individual is currently enrolled in. For individuals in postsecondary education, the counselor will select the credential the individual is working to achieve. For example, the counselor will select associate degree for an individual enrolled in an academic program in community college. For individuals enrolled as an undergraduate at a senior college, bachelor’s degree will be selected. For adults working towards their high school equivalency, the counselor will select Adult Secondary Education.

After selecting the appropriate educational goal from the drop-down menu, enter the individual’s chosen area of study, the begin date, and expected end date. The begin date should be the date the individual enrolled in PSED or training program. The expected end date is the date you *anticipate* the goal being completed. For example, if the educational goal is bachelor’s degree and the begin date is May 5, 2023, the expected end date should be May 5, 2027.

The remainder of the fields in section 1 (actual end date, outcome, degree/certificate title) will be completed when the individual achieves his/her educational goal or disenrolls from the PSED or training program.

 **Section 2.**

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When recording the skill gain date, it is important to remember it shall show the actual date the MSG was achieved, not when the counselor was notified. For example, if an individual graduates with his/her bachelor’s degree on May 10th, but the counselor doesn’t receive the supporting documentation (e.g., transcript) until June 1st, the counselor is still to enter the skill gain date as May 10th.

Next, the counselor shall choose the skill gain type from the drop down menu and enter a brief description. See Appendix A at the end of this section for an explanation of the different skill gain types. Using the same example mentioned above, the counselor would choose Postsecondary Transcript/Report Card as the type and enter a description such as, received bachelor’s degree. Another example would be when an individual, with an educational goal of Master’s Degree, completes his/her first semester of graduate school and gives the counselor a grade report verifying the completion, the counselor would also choose Postsecondary Transcript/Report Card as the type, but would enter the description as something similar to “successful completion of 1st semester graduate school.”

**NOTE**: To receive a MSG in PSED, an individual shall take and pass a minimum of 12 semester hours in one semester or 12 hours over two completed semesters during a 12 month period. For PSED institutions that are on a trimester schedule, an individual shall complete 9 hours in one trimester or 9 hours over the course of two trimesters within a 12 month period. However, if the individual takes less than the required number of hours during the appropriate time period or receives any grade lower than a D, a MSG is not earned for that semester/trimester.

 **Section 3.**



This section is primarily for high school/transition students, however, counselors of individuals in PSED should click the “find” button to search for one of the following programs that best corresponds to the institution where the individual is enrolled.

### 13.19.1 PSED School Programs

* Postsecondary Technical School
* Postsecondary Academic School
* Employer Training Program
* Occupational Skills Program
* Pre-ETS Summer Work Program

**Sections 4 and 5** are optional. However, the best practice is to utilize the sections to capture school information and to comment on things of importance.



**Outcome—The Completion of an Educational Goal**

When an individual has completed his/her educational goal, the counselor shall return to section 1 and complete the Actual End Date and Outcome fields. The Degree/Certificate Title field is optional.

 

Counselors enter the actual date the individual achieved the goal, selects the corresponding outcome from the drop-down list, and if the individual received a degree/certificate, counselors may document the title accordingly, however, the title field is optional. For example, if an individual completes his/her goal and achieves an associate degree, the counselor will enter the date the individual graduated, choose associate degree from the drop-down menu and enter associate degree as the title of the degree received.

### 13.19.2 Internships/Placement Services for PSED Students

It is important for students to have actual, real-world work experience prior to achieving their chosen career goal. Having work experience increases their employability and ensures they are better prepared to meet the demands of full-time work.

Internships offer students a way to gain work experience, increase their practical knowledge, and develop the soft skills that employers value. The ideal time to participate in an internship is during the summer of a student’s last two (2) years of postsecondary training. However, internships are not limited to summers only and should be planned as needed for the individual student. It is prudent that counselors educate students concerning the benefits of internships and encourage them to participate.

The agency has Business Relations Specialists available to assist students in locating internship opportunities and permanent job placements after completion of their PSED program.

## 13.20 COMPLETION OF THE EDUCATION DATA PAGE

For CTP students, the Educational Goal should be *CTP Program*. Generally, these type programs are not eligible for MSGs. However, if a counselor believes an individual participating in a CTP program is learning industry specific skills or will be obtaining an industry specific credential, he/she should discuss the situation with his/her manager and the PSED Program Coordinator to determine if MSGs should be documented.

Upon completion of the entire CTP program, the counselor will document the individual’s educational outcome as *CTP Certificate.*  However, if the individual does not successfully complete the CTP program, *Disenrollment* should be selected as the outcome.

**APPENDIX A**

## 13.21 FIVE TYPES OF MEASUREABLE SKILLS GAINS (MSGs)

Five types of MSGs are allowable under WIOA. The type of education or training program the individual is participating in will determine the type of measurable skills gain that could apply.

1. Educational Functioning Level (EFL) Gain: Applies to an individual who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level. An EFL gain is the advancement of educational level by making measurable improvement in educational attainment as measured by a pre and post-test. An example would be moving from a 9th grade reading level to a 10th grade reading level. An example of a test used to determine this is the TABE.

*Documentation Examples*: Results from a pre- and post-test showing skills gains or academic improvement or enrollment in remedial training and then acceptance into a postsecondary educational training program.

1. Attainment of a Secondary School Diploma or its Recognized Equivalent.

*Documentation Examples*: Copy of High School Diploma or High School Equivalency certificate or an official or unofficial transcript or report card showing the date the diploma/equivalency was received.

1. Secondary or Post–Secondary Transcript/Report Card: A transcript or a report card demonstrating the following based upon enrollment status:

 Secondary-

* Passing grades of a D or above in all classes

 Post-Secondary-

* Full Time Student – completion of a minimum of 12 hours for one semester
* Part-Time Student – completion of a minimum of 12 credit hours in two semesters over the course of a 12-month period.

**NOTE**: For PSED institutions that are on a trimester schedule, an individual shall complete 9 hours in one trimester or 9 hours over the course of two trimesters within a 12-month period. However, if the individual takes less than the required number of hours during the appropriate time period or receives any grade lower than a D an MSG is not earned for that semester/trimester.

*Documentation Examples*: Transcript or report card showing the credit levels were achieved and that the individual was in good academic standing.

1. Training Milestone: Satisfactory or better progress towards established milestones while participating in an OJT, Registered Apprenticeship program, Business Enterprise program, or Employer Training program.

*Documentation Examples*: Employer provides documentation of successful completion of an OJT or one year of an apprenticeship program, or a report provided by OVRB of progress made in BEP program.

1. Skills Progression: Successful passage of an exam required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining trade-related benchmarks, such as knowledge-based exams. Examples include CRC or NCE exams, CDL, and passing a welding certification exam.

*Documentation Examples:* Copy of exam results indicating a passing score or trade related exam results indicating passing score.