**Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services**

**OVR/OVRB Policy and Procedure Manual**

# **Transition Services**

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## **Coordination and Planning for Students with Disabilities**

### **Provision of Services**

The provision of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) employment services to students with disabilities shall be:

1. Governed by OVR/OVRB policies and procedures.
2. In accordance with:
3. State and federal law and regulation.
4. The statewide educational cooperative agreement developed among the Mississippi State Department of Education and the local school districts.

### **OVR/OVRB Role**

The primary role of OVR/OVRB is to provide career guidance and counseling, career assessments, and rehabilitation services related to career-connected activities to eligible students with disabilities who can be served within the Order of Selection during their last two years of high school. OVR/OVRB managers and counselors shall collaborate with appropriate school personnel, family members, and students in support of preparation for post-secondary services and employment. School officials continue to be responsible for providing a free and appropriate public education.

### **Target Population**

OVR/OVRB counselors will provide information about OVR/OVRB, including referral and application procedures, to students enrolled in public and private secondary schools and State-operated programs who meet one of the following criteria:

1. Receiving special education services defined in an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
2. Not receiving special education services but who have a disability pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and who may be receiving services and/or accommodations as required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (i.e., 504 Plan).
3. Not receiving special education services or accommodations as required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, but who have serious health conditions (e.g., sickle cell anemia, respiratory dysfunctions, etc.).

OVR/OVRB considers individuals less than age 22 at application for OVR/OVRB services to be transition students.

### **Outreach Responsibilities**

OVR/OVRB managers and counselors are responsible for developing cooperative working relationships with local education staff, which include:

1. OVR/OVRB transition counselor assignments to all public secondary schools and State-operated programs. Transition counselor assignments may be established with private secondary schools as appropriate.

The OVR/OVRB transition counselor and OVR/OVRB managers shall establish linkages within each school with the following individuals:

1. Chairperson of special education
2. School principal
3. Transition coordinator/teacher
4. Guidance counselor
5. School health personnel
6. Other school-based personnel determined appropriate by the OVR/OVRB transition counselor and manager
7. Information sharing activities such as:
8. Presentations to and cross-training with local school staff regarding OVR/OVRB eligibility requirements, referral process, service provision, and other related issues.
9. Participation in school-based transition activities, including conferences and meetings.
10. Serving in an advisory capacity to facilitate the development of appropriate referrals (e.g., for students at risk of withdrawing from school).
11. Providing consultation to local education staff regarding particularly challenging or complex situations prior to and after referral.
12. Participating on Local Coordinating Councils, as assigned by OVR/OVRB regional management, when appropriate to help facilitate transition to and provision of appropriate adult services for students returning from out-of-state placements.

### **Student Referrals and Intake for VR Employment Services**

Referral and intake procedures specified in Section XXXX apply to students with disabilities. Additional referral procedures and information follow:

1. Students may refer themselves or be referred by school personnel, family members, guardians or other interested persons.
2. When a student is referred for OVR/OVRB services by sources other than the school, the OVR/OVRB counselor will notify the appropriate school personnel of the referral, contingent upon the appropriate authorization for release of information (see Section XXXX).
3. OVR/OVRB managers and transition counselors shall establish referral procedures with school officials to assure that:
4. Student referrals shall be processed in a timely manner to assure a smooth transition from the educational setting.
5. Referrals from school personnel include pertinent and available school-based assessment information, including but not limited to psychological evaluations, vocational evaluations, medical or specialty screenings and 504 plans, if applicable.
6. The OVR/OVRB counselor will arrange a meeting with the student and the student’s parent/guardian to conduct an initial interview and begin to develop a guidance and counseling relationship, in accordance with Section XXXX. For most students, employment will be the goal of VR services. If employment is not the choice of the student and family at this time, the OVR/OVRB counselor shall provide information about Independent Living services provided by the Department of Mental Health and Bureau of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities., along with contact information.
7. Students who are under the age of eighteen (18) are required to have a parent, guardian, or other authorized representative co-sign the Application in person at a school-based meeting, the counselor’s office, or an agreed upon designated location. Therefore, counselors should be certain that parents of students with disabilities are invited to the Initial Interview appointment.
8. The transition counselor will call the parents to schedule an appointment to complete the [*Application for Services (MDRS-VR-01)*](https://mdrsmsgov.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/OVR/OVRForms/MDRS-VR-01%20Application%20for%20VR%20Services%20Form%20-%20ENGLISH%20-%20Rev%2011.2.23.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=HCnGKN) and then send an application appointment letter to the student, the student’s parent(s), and a copy of the letter to school personnel (referral source).
9. If the transition counselor is unable to reach the student/parents by phone and there is no response to the letter, then the transition counselor shall work with school personnel before attempting another phone call and mailing another appointment letter.
10. The transition counselor shall complete the following documents with the student and parent(s) as part of the application process:
11. [MDRS/OVR Application for Vocational Rehabilitation Services (MDRS-VR-01);](https://mdrsmsgov.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/OVR/OVRForms/MDRS-VR-01%20Application%20for%20VR%20Services%20Form%20-%20ENGLISH%20-%20Rev%2011.2.23.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=srbSXd)
12. [MDRS Designated Representative Form (MDRS-VR-07) when applicable;](https://mdrsmsgov.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/OVR/OVRForms/MDRS-VR-07%20Designated%20Representative%20Form%20ENGLISH.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=or11am)
13. [MDRS Request of Protected Personal and Health Information Authorization (MDRS-020);](https://mdrsmsgov.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/OVR/OVRForms/MDRS-020%20PPI%20PHI%20Request%20of%20Protected%20Personal%20and%20Health%20Information%20Authorization%20-%20Rev%207-2024.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=DXKRGR) (**If not already completed during the referral process.)**
14. [MDRS OVR/OVRB Participant Initial Interview Form (MDRS-VR-4);](https://mdrsmsgov.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/OVR/OVRForms/MDRS-VR-04%20Participant%20Inital%20Interview%20Form.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=43cSxl)
15. [MDRS SSI/SSDI Disability Benefits Confirmation Form (MDRS-VR-25)](https://mdrsmsgov.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/OVR/OVRForms/MDRS-VR-25%20SSI.SSDI%20Disability%20Benefit%20Confirmation%20Form%20ENGLISH.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=SoaBg3) for individuals who receive SSI/SSDI; and
16. If a student plans to take part in an on-campus work experience, the transition counselor shall complete both the [Memorandum of Agreement (MDRS-WE-01)](https://mdrsmsgov.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/OVR/OVRForms/Transition%20and%20Youth%20Career%20Services/Work%20Experience/MDRS-WE-01%20Memorandum%20of%20Agreement.docx?d=w6d9ee00263724c87a79ba7c2c826d726&csf=1&web=1&e=uxuhKH) between MDRS/OVR and the work-experience site/school and the [Work Experience Program – Standards of Conduct form (MDRS-WE-02).](https://mdrsmsgov.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/OVR/OVRForms/Transition%20and%20Youth%20Career%20Services/Work%20Experience/MDRS-WE-02%20Work%20Experience%20Program.Standards%20of%20Conduct.docx?d=w5424fa1799144ce38f2cc23977126821&csf=1&web=1&e=hgsE2b)
17. Upon completion of the application process, the transition counselor should enter a referral note in the referral module, and then the individual should be closed out of the referral module and the application information should be entered into the AWARE™ Participant Module. It is critical that counselors accurately complete all applicable fields on the AWARE™ Intake page so that these applicants are identified as a transition student. Under Special Programs, #1. Special Program Options, the transition box **must** be checked.

*Note: A student's application shall* ***not*** *be denied due to the absence of specific evaluation information or reports required by the OVR/OVRB Counselor to determine eligibility. When supporting documentation is unavailable from the school district, it is the OVR/OVRB Counselor’s responsibility to obtain appropriate assessments to ensure sufficient information is gathered for eligibility determination and the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).*

1. Summary of Performance:
2. **Requirement** – The Summary of Performance is a companion document to the high school diploma, alternate diploma, or certificate for students with an IEP which provides a summary of the student's academic achievement and functional performance and recommendations on how to assist the student in reaching post-secondary goals. It is required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.
3. **OVR/OVRB contribution** – OVR/OVRB counselors shall contribute to the Summary of Performance as appropriate, through attendance at IEP meetings and assistance in planning for postsecondary education or employment. In working with school staff, OVR/OVRB counselors shall endeavor to assure that vocational preferences and work experiences are included along with needed supports.
4. **Copy for OVR/ORB record** – The OVR/OVRB counselor shall request a copy of the Summary of Performance from the student for the OVR/OVRB record of services.

### **Joint Sharing and Use of Evaluations and Assessments**

OVR/OVRB is required to use existing information to the greatest degree possible in the determination of eligibility and priority for services as well as rehabilitation needs. In keeping with this requirement, OVR/OVRB staff will work with the student, family, school staff and community resources to obtain such information upon receipt of written authorization. OVR/OVRB counselors shall request OVR/OVRB management consultation if there is a delay in receiving school records.

### **Vocational Assessment**

The OVR/OVRB counselor and school district personnel shall work together to implement activities that students with disabilities may participate in through services provided at community rehabilitation programs (CRP) throughout the state. The proposed semester school schedule may be adapted to meet the needs of the student and the teacher and may be based on each school’s calendar year.

OVR/OVRB counselors should refer students for a vocational assessment once sufficient information has been obtained to confirm the individual has a disability. The student or youth may participate in vocational assessment activities at a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) for up to five (5) hours per day, with a maximum limit of 90 hours per job experience. Upon completion of the vocational assessment, recommendations will assist in identifying appropriate VR services necessary to achieve a successful employment outcome.

### **Pre-ETS: Workplace Readiness Training (Work Adjustment Training)**

Following the vocational assessment, the student may transition to Pre-ETS: Workplace Readiness Training (Work Adjustment Training) to address the barriers to employment identified during the assessment. This vocational training, provided through the CRP, must be individually tailored to each student or youth and may not exceed 120 hours for any single job experience.

Under U.S. Department of Labor regulations, a student or youth must have a documented disability affecting their performance at a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) to qualify for subminimum wage. Before beginning paid work experience, an appropriate assessment must be conducted to demonstrate how the disability impairs the individual’s productivity on CRP work assignments.

### **Eligibility Determination and Order of Selection Category Assignment**

Eligibility for VR employment services shall be determined as indicated in Section XXXX. In addition, the determination of severity of disability and Order of Selection category assignment shall be made concurrently with or prior to the eligibility determination (see Section XXXX).

A student’s status in special education (IEP), as a student with a disability pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (504 plan), or as a student with a significant health condition does not necessarily mean that the student is an individual with a significant or most significant disability. An IEP alone is not sufficient to determine eligibility for VR employment services; additional disability-related documentation must be obtained.

For purposes of eligibility determination, the OVR/OVRB counselor may accept a signed report of a certified school psychologist to substantiate intellectual ability, learning patterns, achievement, motivation, and personality factors related to learning problems in an educational setting.

The counselor must provide the CRP with all relevant documentation—such as school records and reports from qualified professionals (e.g., physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists)—that verifies the disability and explains how it substantially limits the individual’s potential for competitive employment. Based on this documentation, the CRP must determine whether the student or youth can perform work at the facility. If the existing assessment does not address this issue, a new vocational assessment must be completed before the student enters vocational assessment or job-readiness training. All individuals on the AbilityWorks payroll are covered by Workers’ Compensation for the duration of their employment.

### **Development of the IPE for Students with Disabilities**

Policies and procedures in Section XXX and Section XXX apply to students who have been determined eligible for services and can be served under the order of selection in the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). In addition, the following procedures apply to the development of the IPE, as indicated:

1. The IPE must be developed for students determined eligible for OVR/OVRB services who can be served under the Order of Selection prior to provision of in-school rehabilitation/preemployment transition services (Pre-ETS), consistent with Section XXXX, and within 60 days of eligibility. The IPE for students shall be developed before they exit the secondary education program.
2. IPE development must be coordinated with the IEP for each student receiving special education services who is determined eligible for VR employment services who is able to be served under the Order of Selection.
3. In development of the IPE, the employment goal shall be as specific as reasonably possible. Consideration will be given to assessments which may have been completed through OVR/OVRB or as part of the school program, and the IEP for students in special education. The interests, capabilities and informed choice of the individual shall also be considered.

If the individual is uncertain about a specific employment goal, a general occupational category (e.g., “clerical” or “allied health”) may be listed as the employment goal on the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). In such cases, assessment activities shall be included as services on the IPE with the objective of identifying a specific employment goal. The Career Pathway IPE shall be used for students who do not yet have a clearly defined vocational goal and may require participation in the Discovery process. This IPE format shall be utilized to ensure continuity of pre-employment transition services and to initiate additional planned services in a timely manner.

1. The vocational component of the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP), along with the vocational goals and objectives outlined in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), shall be monitored by the OVR/OVRB Counselor to ensure coordination with the school district. All services necessary to achieve the individual's vocational goal shall be included in the IPE, regardless of the service provider (e.g., third-party provider, in-house services, or comparable benefits). A copy of the student’s IPE shall be provided to the student and their parent or guardian, and a copy shall be maintained in the student’s file.

### **Career Pathway IPE**

The Career Pathway Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) shall be used when extensive vocational or career counseling and other vocational rehabilitation (VR) services are required to assist the individual in understanding potential employment goals, exploring career pathways, and evaluating preferences among available options. These services shall support the individual in selecting a definitive vocational goal for future VR planning.

The Career Pathway IPE is designed to:

* Expedite the delivery of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to students and youth with significant disabilities.
* Identify an initial vocational goal aligned with Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) major group categories (e.g., Career Pathway to Healthcare Support Occupations).
* Provide VR counseling and guidance, career exploration, and other designated VR services more promptly following a determination of eligibility.
* Establish a stronger foundation for developing clear career objectives.
* Enhance motivation by engaging the individual earlier and facilitating quicker experiences of success.
* Increase awareness among students and youth regarding available occupations and career options.
* Promote understanding of career pathways available within their local community.
* Support the development of insight into individual interests and capabilities.
* Enable faster access to pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) and other support services under an IPE.

1. When developing a Career Pathway Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), the Transition Counselor may utilize vocational interest assessments to identify the student’s initial employment goal and initiate the Discovery and assessment process. A general career category shall serve as the vocational goal until a specific, definitive goal is established.
2. If the Discovery process and assessment results indicate multiple potential employment goals, the goal that most closely aligns with the individual's preferences, interests, and expectations for salary and benefits shall be selected. As the case progresses, the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) shall be amended if a more appropriate employment outcome is identified.
3. Upon completion of career exploration and achievement of the established goals and objectives, the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) shall be amended to reflect the selection of a specific employment goal.

#### Career Pathway IPE Employment Goal

The identification of an employment goal that aligns with the individual’s strengths, abilities, capabilities, interests, resources, and informed choice shall involve various activities to support vocational exploration. A Career Pathway employment goal may initially be established within a broad occupational category, based on a preliminary assessment of the individual’s interests. This allows the individual to select an employment goal area using a major Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code and explore that area to ensure it is consistent with their personal attributes and informed choice before selecting a specific employment goal.

As the career exploration is completed, the IPE will be amended to select the final employment goal with a more specific Broad Group SOC code and services that is based on a comprehensive assessment.

The Career Pathway IPE is developed using Employment Goal: Career Pathway – With a major SOC Code in one of the pathway areas such as:

* 11-0000  [Management Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#11-0000)
* 13-0000  [Business and Financial Operations Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#13-0000)
* 15-0000  [Computer and Mathematical Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#15-0000)
* 17-0000  [Architecture and Engineering Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#17-0000)
* 19-0000  [Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#19-0000)
* 21-0000  [Community and Social Service Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#21-0000)
* 23-0000  [Legal Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#23-0000)
* 25-0000  [Educational Instruction and Library Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#25-0000)
* 27-0000  [Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#27-0000)
* 29-0000  [Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#29-0000)
* 31-0000  [Healthcare Support Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#31-0000)
* 33-0000  [Protective Service Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#33-0000)
* 35-0000  [Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#35-0000)
* 37-0000  [Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#37-0000)
* 39-0000  [Personal Care and Service Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#39-0000)
* 41-0000  [Sales and Related Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#41-0000)
* 43-0000  [Office and Administrative Support Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#43-0000)
* 45-0000  [Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#45-0000)
* 47-0000  [Construction and Extraction Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#47-0000)
* 49-0000  [Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#49-0000)
* 51-0000  [Production Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#51-0000)
* 53-0000  [Transportation and Material Moving Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#53-0000)
* 55-0000  [Military Specific Occupations](https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm#55-0000)

<https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/major_groups.htm> (Click on link to access most current SOC major group link.)

Identifying Individuals Appropriate for a Career Pathway IPE

Eligible students and youth who may benefit from a Career Pathway IPE:

1. Individuals who need additional information about available occupations to establish an appropriate employment goal.
2. Individuals who require further insight into their interests and capabilities to determine a suitable employment goal.
3. Individuals who need a clearer understanding of the Career Pathways available in their community to make an informed choice in selecting an employment goal.

#### Monitoring a Career Pathway IPE

1. Counseling and guidance, including face-to-face appointments, shall occur at least once every 60 days to assess the student’s progress toward meeting established objectives. Additional appointments may be scheduled as needed to ensure the individual receives adequate support from the counselor throughout the process.
2. The objective of a Career Pathway Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is to support the counselor in advising, counseling, and guiding the individual through the vocational exploration process. The Transition Counselor shall direct individuals to appropriate job information resources. Job Exploration Counseling is essential for individuals who lack a clear employment goal, have unrealistic expectations, or have not yet identified a specific vocational objective.
3. The Career Pathway Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) shall have an end date not to exceed 12 months. An extension of up to six (6) additional months may be approved by the District Manager and shall be documented in a Case Note in AWARE™.

Career Pathway service examples include but are not limited to:

* VR Counseling and Guidance
* Pre-ETS: Vocational/Career Exploration
* Vocational Evaluation/Assessment
* Pre-ETS: Work Based Learning Experiences
* Psychological Evaluation
* Assistive Technology Evaluation
* Benefits Counseling

#### Guidelines for Amending, Extending, and Closing Career Pathway IPEs

When it is determined that the individual will pursue post-secondary education or training, the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) shall be amended to document a specific employment goal, including the corresponding Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code, along with the planned career or training services.

The maximum duration of a Career Pathway IPE is twelve (12) months. An extension of up to six (6) additional months may be approved by the District Manager if it is determined that the extended period is necessary and will lead to the identification of a specific employment goal. However, once the student exits secondary education (K–12), the IPE shall be amended as soon as feasible to reflect a specific employment goal prior to proceeding with additional training or job placement services.

District Managers shall be responsible for tracking all Career Pathway cases to ensure the accuracy of SOC codes and for monitoring these cases through completion.

An individual’s case shall not be closed as Rehabilitated under a Career Pathway employment goal. Closure as Rehabilitated may occur only when a minimum of a broad group occupation SOC code has been identified within one of the following IPE Amendment plan types: Assistive Technology, Counseling and Guidance, Training, or Physical/Mental Restoration.

If the student discontinues participation in vocational rehabilitation (VR) services, the case shall be placed in Interrupted status for a period of ninety (90) days. If, after this period, the individual remains uninterested in resuming VR services, the counselor shall proceed with the necessary steps to exit the individual from the VR program and close the case.

### **Financial Responsibilities**

All OVR/OVRB financial policies and procedures apply to students with disabilities. See Section XXXX and Section XXXX, respectively.

## **Services for Transition-aged Individuals not in Secondary School at Application**

OVR/OVRB provides VR employment services to young people with disabilities who are less than 22 years of age at application, whether or not they are in secondary school. For those not in secondary school, services are provided consistent with eligibility, priority of service and plan requirements in Section XXXX, Section XXXX and Section XXXX, and consistent with the following:

1. The timeframe for IPE development (90 days) applies.
2. Provision of career counseling by the OVR/OVRB counselor is particularly important since individuals in this age range will have at best limited employment experience.
3. Engagement with parents/guardians is an important role for OVR/OVRB counselors working with young people with disabilities, as appropriate.

## **Educational Goal Page for VR Eligible Students**

Secondary and postsecondary VR-eligible students in Service status who have an Education/Training service identified in their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and an Educational Goal documented on the Educational Goal page in AACE are eligible to earn Measurable Skill Gains (MSG). Students enrolled in special education who are pursuing a Certificate of Completion and not on a diploma track are **excluded**. MSG data is reported quarterly to RSA as part of the Common Performance Measures.

1. When setting dates on the Educational Goal page the OVR/OVRB Counselor shall note the following procedures:
2. For postsecondary students, the counselor shall select one of two options: Postsecondary Academic School or Postsecondary Technical School (type post and then search to access these options);
3. Each Educational Goal Record shall have a Begin Date and an Expected End Date;
4. The first Educational Goal Record shall be when a student is enrolled in a secondary program ‘Secondar School’. The Begin date shall be the start date of when the case was opened. This Educational Goal Record shall remain open until the student is no longer enrolled in a secondary program (ex. Graduated, Exited, and/or Disenrolled). This ensures the participant is continually identified as a “student with a disability”.
5. An educational goal shall be entered for each grade level the student is enrolled in. As the student passes each grade level, the educational goal shall be closed with an Actual End Date and the Outcome selected, “Completion, No Degree or Certificate”. A new educational goal shall be opened for the next grade level the student is enrolled in. The Begin Date shall be the start date of when the student begins that current grade and the Actual End Date shall be the date the student completes that grade for the year.
6. Once the student is no longer enrolled in a secondary program, the educational goal for 12th grade shall be closed with an “Actual End Date” and an Outcome selected. There are four outcomes to select from: High School Diploma, Alternate Diploma, Special Education Certificate, and/or Disenrollment. The educational goal, Secondary School, shall also be closed at this time.
7. There shall **be two** (2) Educational Goal Records set and open for students who are enrolled in a secondary program. This will include the ‘Secondary School’ goal and ‘Grade Level’ goal.
8. For students attending a high school equivalency program, the counselor shall use the search figure and type in adult secondary to pull up the high school equivalency code.

### **Activity Due Reminders**

1. **Educational Goal Actual End**: An activity due reminder will be generated 14 days before the expected end date.
2. **Educational Goal Progress Review:** An “activity due” reminder will be automatically generated 30 days before a student with a disability turns 22. This notice alerts the counselor to adjust funding sources, as the participant will no longer meet the definition of a student with a disability after that date.

## **Measurable Skills Gains Record (Required for VR Eligible Students)**

**Measurable Skill Gains (MSG)-** are only reported in the Common Performance Measures (CPM) for “VR Participants”.

1. The OVR/OVRB counselor shall complete the Measurable Skills Gain (MSG) at the end of each grade completed for VR eligible secondary students and each semester/quarter for post-secondary VR students. When adding Measurable Skill Gains, there must be documentation in the case file to support the Measurable Skill Gain (ex. Report card, Transcripts, etc.).
2. The “Secondary School” educational goal does not capture Measurable Skill Gains (MSG); therefore, no MSG entries should be recorded under this goal. MSG must instead be tracked and documented within the educational goal associated with each specific grade level.
3. Measurable Skill Gains shall not be entered for Potentially Eligible case types. Students must be in Service status to be eligible to earn Measurable Skill Gains.
4. Measurable Skill Gains shall not be entered for students who are enrolled in a secondary program working towards a Certificate of Completion.
5. After recording the MSG(s) for the applicable school year or grade level, update the record by entering the corresponding Outcome and Actual End Date; and
6. If the student is scheduled to return, a new Educational Goal page shall be created.

## **Documenting Agency Provided Services on the Case Note Page**

Effective July 1, 2021, agency-provided services shall be documented in Section 3 of the AWARE™ Case Note page. The AWARE™ Actual Service page is no longer required for recording these services. However, the AWARE™ Actual Service page shall continue to be used for documenting services that are funded entirely (100%) by a comparable benefit.

Agency-provided services include, but are not limited to, the following: pre-employment transition services, benefits counseling, counseling and guidance, job search assistance, job placement assistance, and information and referral. *These services are reported to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) when selected under Section 3: Activities Provided on the* AWARE™ *Case Note page.*

For RSA definitions of services reported as “Agency Provided Services” on the RSA-911 when selected in Section 3 of the AWARE™ Case Note, see the [RSA-911 Data Manual](https://mdrsmsgov.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/OVR/AACE%20Release%20Updates/A%20participant%20may%20not%20have%20two%20cases%20of%20the%20same%20type%20open%20in%20the%20same%20federal%20fiscal%20year.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=a1v6Np) available on SharePoint.

## **Guidelines for Logging Pre-ETS Hours in the TimeClock System**

1. The Transition Counselor, Supported Employment (SE) Counselor, and any other OVR/OVRB staff member who delivers any of the five required or four coordinated Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) activities shall enter this information into the TimeClock Plus system on a weekly basis.
2. The name of the school where Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are provided by the OVR/OVRB Counselor shall be documented in three locations: the counselor’s weekly itinerary, the AWARE™ case note with the corresponding Pre-ETS activity selected, and the counselor’s travel voucher log.
3. Travel time to schools for the purpose of delivering Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) or attending meetings related to the provision of Pre-ETS by staff may be recorded as Pre-ETS time.
4. Time spent collaborating with the school to assess the student’s learning style, academic level, and to schedule Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) activities, as well as time dedicated to preparing Pre-ETS lesson plans, shall be recorded as Pre-ETS time under a required activity.
5. Administrative tasks are **not** eligible to be recorded as Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) activities.

**Examples of required Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) activities**

Examples of required Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) activities include, but are not limited to: discussing vocational interests, labor market trends, and career pathways with students; reviewing and interpreting career assessments; coordinating and supervising job shadowing, internships, and simulated workplace experiences; providing information on postsecondary education options such as colleges, training programs, military service, and disability services; teaching job-seeking skills, financial literacy, soft skills, and employer expectations; facilitating instruction on self-advocacy, communication, and peer mentoring; scoring assessments and preparing related career resources; customizing instructional materials to individual student needs; and reviewing curricula to ensure materials are evidence-based and appropriate for Pre-ETS delivery.

### **Examples of Pre-ETS “Coordination” Activities**

Coordinated Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) activities include, but are not limited to: attending individualized education program (IEP) or person-centered planning meetings when invited; collaborating with schools and agencies to ensure the provision of Pre-ETS; working with local workforce development boards, one-stop centers, and employers to create employment opportunities such as internships, summer jobs, apprenticeships, and year-round work experiences for students with disabilities; and reviewing student documentation, such as IEPs or 504 plans, to support Pre-ETS planning.

Additional examples include educating parents about Pre-ETS activities and obtaining necessary consent; informing school personnel about Pre-ETS, identifying service gaps, and assessing student needs; setting up work-based learning experiences, college visits, employer tours, mentoring, and other community-based activities; and consulting with service providers to design and deliver individualized Pre-ETS based on each student’s needs.

*Note: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors may only record regular work hours in the TimeClock Plus system for required or coordinated Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) activities. Administrative costs—including salaries of clerical staff or supervisors—as well as any time charged outside of regular work hours (e.g., vacation, personal, or sick leave), shall not be charged to Pre-ETS funds, in accordance with Section 7(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR §361.5(c)(2).*

## **Guidelines for Transition Case Referrals to Supported Employment Services**

1. The OVR/OVRB Counselor shall meet with potential referrals and review the supporting documentation provided by the school. Students identified by the school as requiring additional supports to succeed in the educational environment may be presumed to need long-term supports to obtain and maintain employment.
2. Before referring a student to the Supported Employment (SE) Counselor, the OVR/OVRB Counselor shall confirm that the student meets the minimum eligibility criteria for SE services and is in their senior or exiting year of school. The student must be classified as having a Most Significant Disability, be expected to require intensive SE services, and need ongoing extended services to maintain Competitive Integrated Employment.
3. After completing the VR application, the OVR/OVRB Counselor shall review the student’s IEP, Section 504 Plan, and/or supporting school assessments to determine eligibility for VR services. The counselor shall also begin evaluating the individual's need for VR services and authorize services as necessary to obtain information not available through other sources.
4. For potential Supported Employment (SE) students who are more than two years from exiting high school, the OVR/OVRB Counselor shall develop a fast-track Career Pathway Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) after establishing VR eligibility. The OVR/OVRB Counselor shall initiate the Discovery process and provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) as appropriate.
5. An initial staffing to assess the student’s need for SE services shall be scheduled and coordinated by the OVR/OVRB Counselor and SE Counselor, with the District Manager in attendance. During this meeting, the referring counselor shall share all relevant medical, psychological, or physical information, as well as any known employment-related limitations. The Counselors shall collaborate to develop the SE justification statement and document it in a case note in AWARE™.
6. If questions arise regarding eligibility for Supported Employment (SE) services, the OVR/OVRB Counselor and SE Counselor must refer the case to their respective supervisors. The supervisors will review assessment documentation in the student's case file to determine the appropriateness of SE services. Upon review, the supervisors may either verify the sufficiency of the current assessment information or request additional documentation to ensure the most suitable program selection to meet the student's specific needs. If necessary, consultation with the Supported Employment Program Coordinator may be initiated during this determination process.
7. Once it has been determined that the student will benefit from Supported Employment (SE) services, a meeting will be scheduled involving the student and/or their legal representative, along with any additional individuals the student wishes to invite. If, after a thorough discussion and with fully informed consent from the student and/or their legal representative, all parties concur that the SE program is the most suitable option, the student's case will then be transferred to the SE Counselor according to established case transfer procedures. (See Section XXXX)

Pre-ETS needed by the student shall be coordinated by the Supported Employment Counselor.

## **Project SEARCH**

[Project SEARCH](https://www.projectsearch.us/) (PS) provides transition services for students with disabilities, ages 18–21, who are in their exiting year of high school. The program offers a structured, school-to-work training experience aimed at preparing students for competitive integrated employment.

OVR/OVRB Program Coordinators and OVR/OVRB Counselors shall collaborate to identify students who may benefit from participation in the program. This process shall include outreach activities such as engaging with school districts, conducting informational sessions for parents, and participating in transition fairs.

Project SEARCH transition participants shall meet the following criteria:

* Be at least 18 years of age;
* Have not yet graduated from high school;
* Have an active Individualized Education Program (IEP);
* Have a documented intellectual or developmental disability;
* Have completed the required high school credits for graduation;
* Have agreed that Project SEARCH will serve as their final year of secondary education; and
* Have an expressed goal of obtaining competitive integrated employment upon program completion.

### **Referrals to Project SEARCH**

When a transition student’s interests, skills, and abilities align with a Project SEARCH (PS) site, the OVR/OVRB Counselor shall engage the student in a discussion to determine whether participation in Project SEARCH is appropriate for the student's vocational training goals.

* 1. If the student makes an informed decision and expresses interest in participating, the Transition Counselor must:

1. Complete the [MDRS-VR-101](https://mdrsmsgov.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/OVR/OVRForms/MDRS-VR-101%20Project%20SEARCH%20Referral%20Form%20-%202.28.25.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=Y7IALJ) Project SEARCH Referral Form.
2. Draft a service authorization for the Project SEARCH Skills Assessment in AWARE™.
3. Enter a case note in AWARE™ documenting:
4. The student’s interest in the program,
5. Completion of the service authorization, and
6. Attachment of the [MDRS-VR-101](https://mdrsmsgov.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/OVR/OVRForms/MDRS-VR-101%20Project%20SEARCH%20Referral%20Form%20-%202.28.25.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=Y7IALJ) form.
   1. The OVR/OVRB Program Coordinator shall review the referral and prepare for the student to attend Skills Assessment Day at the designated host site when scheduled
   2. Early referrals are encouraged; however, all referrals shall be submitted by January 31st to ensure the student can participate in the interview and assessment process conducted in the spring. By the date of the scheduled Skills Assessment Day, the transition student shall have an eligibility determination of "Eligible" or a status beyond eligibility. Students who are only in "Potentially Eligible" status shall **not** participate in Project SEARCH.

### **Post-Referral Documentation**

1. The OVR/OVRB Program Coordinator shall document all relevant information related to the student’s referral in the Service Module in AACE until the Skills Assessment is completed and the associated service authorization is closed.
2. If the student is selected to participate in the Project SEARCH program, the PS Steering Committee shall issue an acceptance letter to the student. The OVR/OVRB Program Coordinator shall obtain a copy of the acceptance letter and provide it to the OVR/OVRB Counselor.
3. If the student is not selected for the program, the PS Steering Committee shall issue a formal denial letter with recommendations. The OVR/OVRB Program Coordinator shall obtain a copy of the denial letter and inform the student’s OVR/OVRB Counselor of the decision by providing a copy of the denial letter. The OVR/OVRB Counselor should schedule a staffing with the client to review the reasons for denial and assist the student in identifying and planning appropriate next steps.

**IPE Development – PS Transition**

The PS intern and the OVR/OVRB Counselor must jointly develop/amend an IPE that identifies their employment goal and all services that will help them achieve employment, including those related to PS.

The PS IPEs are developed as Training plans. While each IPE is individualized, some services commonly planned on a PS intern’s IPE who are students are the following:

* VR Counseling and Guidance
* Job Search/Job Preparation Services
* Job Placement Services
* Job Trainer for Project SEARCH
* Maintenance: Room/Board/Personal Items (Uniforms for Project SEARCH)
* Transportation
* Pre-Employment Transition Services
  + Pre-ETS: Counseling on Post-Secondary Ed Oppty
  + Pre-ETS: Instruction in Self-Advocacy
  + Pre-ETS: Job Exploration Counseling
  + Pre-ETS: Work Based Learning Experience
  + Pre-ETS: Workplace Readiness Training
* Any other pertinent VR services needed.

For students, the secondary education goal on the IPE must be selected to indicate “*Achieving secondary school diploma or equivalent is a goal.*”