

2024



COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING<sup>®</sup>  
CONFERENCE

# ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICE

GUIDANCE FOR SUPPORTING  
INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AND  
THEIR HIGHER EDUCATION TRANSITION

# WHO ARE WE?

- **Nicole McNeal-McGee, LPC, CRC – Supervisor**  
**- 1South – DHS/DRS**

# WHO IS DHS/DRS?

- **DHS's Division of Rehabilitation Services is the state's lead agency serving individuals with disabilities. DRS works in partnership with people with disabilities and their families to assist them in making informed choices to achieve full community participation through employment, education, and independent living opportunities.**

# WHAT IS A DISABILITY?

An impairment that can be.....

1. Visible or hidden
2. Congenital or acquired
3. Temporary or permanent
4. It does not discriminate (age, gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.)
5. Can be physical or mental

# DRS' DEFINITION OF A DISABILITY

- An individual who has a disability as determined pursuant to Title II and Title XVI of the Social Security Act (42 USC 401 et seq. and 1381 et seq.) and desires to achieve an employment outcome; **OR**

# An individual who meets all of the following:

- Is determined by qualified personnel to have a physical or mental impairment that constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment for the individual;
- Is determined by a qualified **vocational rehabilitation counselor employed by DHS-DRS** to require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment consistent with the customer's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice;
- And is presumed to be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome.

- **A Rehabilitation Counselor determines eligibility for VR services using the criteria in the previous slide.**
- **A thorough discussion between customer and counselor is held regarding the customer's desired vocational goal and the services needed in order for the customer to reach their vocational goal.**

**A financial analysis is completed to determine if there is any financial participation.**

- **SSI/SSDI recipients are exempt from financial analysis.**
- **Some services are exempt from a financial analysis. Examples are: diagnostic services, On the Job Training, vocational counseling, job placement assistance, and auxiliary services.**



# WHY ARE WE HERE?

- **DRS encourages our customers to enroll in college/vocational training programs because the more education, the more money one can potentially earn.**
- **DRS is trying to eliminate some of the financial burden that keeps individuals from attending a college program.**

# VR-008: 2010 COMMUNITY COLLEGE INITIATIVE. \*Revised Nov 2022\*

- DRS customers who attend public community colleges are **EXEMPT** from financial participation.
- Customers still apply for FAFSA and scholarships, awards, and other comparable benefits are still applicable for cases applied by the policy.
- DRS customers who are enrolled in an In-state public community college or approved public community college bordering the state will be exempt from customer financial participation for any costs directly related to their attendance. This includes the cost of tuition, fees, books and supplies as well as support costs such as transportation, housing and meal plans. The out of state public community college must be closer than an in-state public community college and/or offer a program that it not offered at the in-state public community college.
- DRS will contribute up to the “in-district” cost for students attending private community college.
- Only courses leading to a degree or certificate are counted.

# NON-DEGREE TRAINING(NO COMPARABLE IL PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGE)

- Certificate must be required to achieve their vocational goal.
- Degree or certificate must lead to an industry recognized credential.
- The institution must be an approved training facility.
- Must apply for FAFSA.

# UNIVERSITY TRAINING

- Illinois public 4-year university
  - DRS will provide up to the published costs for in-state tuition & fees
  - DRS will assist with purchase of medical/health insurance offered by the school, if required
  - DRS will assist with purchase of books, supplies & materials needed to complete training program

# GRADUATE SCHOOL

- DRS will assist with financial contribution toward graduate school **ONLY** when a graduate degree is needed to reach the employment goal.
- Customer must pay 10% of tuition and fees if not receiving Social Security Disability Benefits **AND** any additional costs due, based on family income or if attending a private university.

# DRS Maximum Tuition Assistance 2024-2025

## PRIVATE & OUT OF STATE UNIVERSITY

Per Year-Undergraduate \$16,020

Per Semester- \$8,010

Per Credit Hr ( $\leq 14$ ) \$534

Per Year – Graduate \$22,504

Semester - \$11,252

Per Credit Hour - \$750

## PRIVATE & OUT OF STATE NON- DEGREE

(no comparable community college program)

Per Year \$6,650

Per Semester \$3,325

Per Credit Hr ( $\leq 14$ ) \$222

**ANY FUNDS AVAILABLE FROM A PUBLIC SOURCE (grants, awards or scholarships) MUST BE USED BEFORE DRS WILL CONTRIBUTE TO TRAINING**

**DRS does not discourage applying for student loans, but you are not required to accept such loans.**

# FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

- Provide proof of all income for family members 19 yrs. and older. Everyone listed on FAFSA must provide income.
- If you are receiving Social Security disability benefits for yourself, you are exempt from the Financial Analysis.
- If there is a financial participation, it should be paid prior to receiving paid services from DRS.
- The Financial Analysis is completed at least annually and at any time there is either a reported change or a reason to believe there is a change in the customer's financial situation that will affect customer financial participation.

# CUSTOMER RESPONSIBILITIES

Every **YEAR** you must provide to your counselor:

- Most recent Federal tax return {student and parent(s)}
- Complete FAFSA Application Yearly
- Submit FAFSA award or denial notification

Every **SEMESTER** you must provide to your counselor:

- Grades that show cumulative GPA
- Schedule of **FULL TIME** classes for next semester



# RESPONSIBILITIES CON'T

- Maintain cumulative “C” (2.0) or above grade point average (GPA)
  - If GPA falls below “C” (2.0) DRS may provide financial contribution for 1 more probationary semester.
  - Counselor and Customer must agree continued training is appropriate.
  - DRS may not resume financial contribution if minimum GPA (2.0) not met after probation.
  - If you fail a class that DRS paid for you are required to pay an equal number of credit hours the following semester.

# RESPONSIBILITIES CON'T

- DRS counselor must be notified **BEFORE** you change, withdraw or drop a course.
- If you fail to notify the counselor before making the change you will be required to pay an equal number of credit hours the following semester.

# ATTENDANCE

- DRS will allow up to THREE years to complete an Associate's degree or become a Junior and no more than 3 additional years to complete a Bachelor's degree. In short, 3 years to complete an Associate's degree and 6 years to complete a Bachelor's degree.
- If you cannot continue in your program or need a leave of absence for medical reasons, you must get written verification from your doctor. Please notify both the school and DRS counselor as soon as possible.

# REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

- Acceptance letter from college/program
- Transcript with GPA
- FAFSA confirmation page
- ACT or SAT score
- Financial Aid award/denial letter from your college or university
- Parent(s)/Student's Federal income tax return (If under age 24 parent's proof of income is required)
- Class schedule
- Account Summary of Charges/Bill from School
- Book list
- \* These items are needed before the school term begins\*

# HOW TO MAKE A REFERRAL

- 45 Statewide offices
- [IDHS: Office Locator \(state.il.us\)](http://state.il.us)
- Apply Online
- [DHS: Rehabilitation Services: Apply Online \(illinois.gov\)](http://illinois.gov)
- Customer Help Line • (800) 843-6154

