The Vocational Rehabilitation Process for Specific Learning Disorders

A Guide for Transition Partners

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The Fred & Wilma Show

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Purpose of Training

- Fulfill Schools’ Request for Training
  1) Clarify Transition Policy PPM 510
  2) Promote Statewide Consistency in Assessment and Eligibility Decisions
Application Process for Transition Students

Current Vocational Rehabilitation transition policy (PPM 510) states that:

- Students may apply for services the next-to-the-last (junior) year of high school.
- Services may be authorized at the beginning of the last (senior) year of high school.
Contacts with the School Staff

- VR is to meet with school personnel annually to review which students with disabilities may be eligible for VR services.

- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors should be invited to attend the case conferences of those students who are likely going to be eligible for VR services.

**HANDOUT PROVIDED**
Transition Resources

- Indiana Institute on Disability & Community, CCLC website
  www.iidc.indiana.edu/cclc

- *Building Effective Transition Partnerships*
What’s the Difference?

- According to VR policy, presence or absence of an impairment is based on the current DSM-IV-TR definition of LD.

- Not all students classified as LD under Article 7 meet the DSM-IV-TR definition.

- Need to discuss this with students, school personnel, and parents as early as possible.
VR Eligibility – PPM 421.05

- The individual has a physical or mental impairment
- The impairment constitutes a substantial impediment to employment
- The person requires VR services to prepare for, enter or maintain employment
- The individual can benefit from VR services
Eligibility criteria continued…

Required practice: Each of the four eligibility requirements must be applied in the sequence specified in paragraph (1) of this section, and an ineligibility determination must be made—and further assessment must be determined—with the first criterion that is not met.
Requirement for VR Services
Diagnosis – DSM-IV-TR

- Achievement in reading, mathematics, or written expression is substantially below that expected for age, schooling, and level of intelligence.

- Significant interference with academic achievement or activities of daily living.

- If sensory deficit is present, the learning difficulties must be in excess of those usually associated with the deficit.
“Substantially below” defined

- Usually defined as a discrepancy of at least two standard deviations between achievement and IQ.
- A smaller discrepancy is sometimes used, especially when IQ test performance may have been compromised by
  - Associated disorder in cognitive processing
  - Co-morbid mental disorder
  - General medical condition
  - Individual’s ethnic or cultural background
Standardized Tests
Comparison of Article 7 and VR Eligibility

**Entitled to Special Education:**
- Article 7 outlines entitlement to special education services
- “Severe discrepancy” between the student’s academic achievement and potential is undefined
- Decision is made by the case conference committee

**Eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services:**
- VR calls for an LD diagnosis to come from the *DSM-IV-TR*
- “Substantially below” is a discrepancy of two or more standard deviations between achievement and IQ
- Diagnosis is made by a licensed clinician
Determining the Impairment
A Learning Disability is:

- A persistent problem without any cure
- A life-long condition that evolves throughout the developmental continuum
- The largest segment of the disability population
- A disability that affects every aspect of one’s personal life
- A central nervous system disorder that has uneven patterns of development and aptitude/achievement discrepancies
Reading Disorder

- Reading accuracy, speed, or comprehension is affected.

- Oral reading is characterized by distortions, substitutions, or omissions.

- Both oral and silent reading characterized by slowness and comprehension errors.

- Sometimes referred to as “dyslexia.”
Mathematics Disorder

- Mathematical calculation and reasoning are affected.

Impaired skills may include:
- Linguistic
- Perceptual
- Attention
- Mathematical
Disorder of Written Expression

- Writing skills are affected.
- Trouble with composing written text:
  - Grammatical/punctuation errors
  - Poor paragraph organization
  - Multiple spelling errors
  - Excessively poor handwriting (Note: Only spelling errors or poor handwriting does not generally lead to this diagnosis.)
Learning Disorder Not Otherwise Specified

- Disorders in learning that do not meet criteria for any specific Learning Disorder.

- Might include problems in all three areas that when taken together significantly interfere with achievement even though individual test performance is not substantially below expected.
Disorders Associated with LD

- Often associated with emotional problems or social skill deficits and may co-exist with a variety of other impairments.
  - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
  - Conduct Disorder
  - Opposition-Defiant Disorder
  - Major Depressive Disorder
  - Dysthymic Disorder
  - Developmental delays in language
  - Abnormalities in cognitive processing
What is Next?
Who comes to VRS? and Why?

- Student completing high school seeking help with post-secondary training/education.

- Adult presenting with physical or other impairments, where a learning disorder appears in the Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

- Adult presenting with other impairment, but who also knows of “learning problems” as a child.
The Assessment Process: What the VRC Needs to Know

- Identify barriers to:
  - obtaining or maintaining employment;
  - completing education/training needed to access careers consistent with capability;
  - learning new tasks
Interviewing

- Interview the **applicant**, not just the parent or advocate
- Utilize the Indiana Checklist for Learning Disorders **
- Collect the history
- Record behavioral observations
- Identify classroom supports provided
- Discuss with the teacher what supports have been/will be needed for the student

**HANDOUT PROVIDED**
Gathering Additional Information

- Obtain and review school records
- Refer records for review by a consulting psychologist with expertise in LD
- Authorize for additional testing
  - as recommended by the psychologist
  - if current testing does not apply the DSM-IV-TR diagnosis
  - if testing was administered prior to grade 8
Making the Decisions

- Determine impediment
- Determine need for VR services
Determining the Impediment

- Look at the impact of the functional limitations on ability to perform, maintain, or prepare for appropriate work -- commensurate with ability and capability.
- Focus on work and/or learning tasks
- Consider specific barriers to completing post-secondary training needed to prepare for appropriate work.
Determining Required Services

- What were the supports the person used and will continue to need?
- What VR services are needed to obtain or prepare for appropriate employment?
Assessment Questions

- Refer to the Learning Disorders handout in the training packet
- Brainstorm questions with your group
- Each group share additional questions
- Guided Activity: Case Studies
Eligibility Example

- Melissa is unable to accurately understand material presented in lectures and is also unable to effectively compose reports, research papers, and essays. These problems will be a substantial barrier to completing the education she needs to become an electrical engineer.

- She will require counseling and guidance, tutoring, adaptive software, and other aids.
Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

- Review intake observations
- Review testing information
- Assess need for rehabilitation technology
- Consider past supports vs. current supports necessary for work/training
- Review behavioral/social skills issues
- Consider career information vs. functional information
Possible Services in the IPE for LD

- Services may be provided by VR or a comparable benefit and may include:
  - Remedial training
  - Medication, management strategies for associated conditions, such as ADHD
  - Speech/language treatment
Services continued...

- Classroom assistance, such as:
  - notetakers
  - proofreading/checking
  - transcription
  - tutoring (not peer)
  - compensatory techniques
  - extra test time
Services continued…

- Technology, such as PC’s, spell-check, voice-recognition software, etc.
- Social interaction training
- Psychotherapy
- Training

It is critical that VRCs get recommendations from professionals who are skilled in diagnosing LD.
Handouts

- Article 7 definition of a learning disability
- Indiana Checklist for Learning Disorders
- Building Effective Transition Partnerships
Questions & Answers
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References


