

Information Transmittal
Vocational Rehabilitation



Howard Fulk, Policy and Training Manager
Authorized signature

Number: VR-AR 23-02 revised
Issue date: 04/28/2023 revised

Topic: Other

Due Date: 04/28/2023

Subject: Vocational Rehabilitation's professional working relationship expectations for counselors and program participants

Applies to (check all that apply):

☐ All DHS employees	☐ County Mental Health Directors
☐ Area Agencies on Aging: {Select type}	☐ Health Services
☐ Aging and People with Disabilities	☐ Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS)
☐ Self Sufficiency Programs	☐ ODDS Children's Intensive in Home Services
☐ County DD program managers	☐ Stabilization and Crisis Unit (SACU)
☐ Support Service Brokerage Directors	☒ Vocational Rehabilitation Staff
☐ ODDS Children's Residential Services	
☐ Child Welfare Programs	

ACTION REQUIRED:

This transmittal clarifies Vocational Rehabilitation's (VR) workplace expectations for VR staff and program participants.

REASON FOR ACTION:

When applicants apply for vocational rehabilitation services, they are asked to sign their application to show that they agree with the following paragraph:

The VR process is based on mutual respect. You and everyone involved in your case will treat each other in a way that always demonstrates this respect. VR is a participatory process that only works when we all follow through on our commitments. The process is voluntary, meaning if you don't want to work with us, no one can require you to be a VR participant. The process is time-limited, meaning progress must be made towards your job goal for services to continue.

This agreement creates an expectation that both VR program staff and our clients will meet and engage in an environment that is mutually supportive, respectful and leads toward the achievement of a common goal.

POLICY:

Understanding our clients' unique disabilities as well as their lived experiences are essential to providing culturally appropriate and trauma informed service.

Our Program is committed to ensure that both clients and staff are treated with the same respect and courtesy that would be expected within a community workplace environment.

Staff Responsibilities

Program staff must respect the diversity, dignity, and self-determination of all program participants.

Communication between Vocational Rehabilitation staff and participants should occur in the participant's primary language. Clients will be provided access to an appropriate mode of communication that allows their greatest possible understanding of the VR process.

Program services will always be conducted in a mutually beneficial manner and in accordance with ODHS and VRs behavioral and professional agreements.

Staff will provide information to clients to assist the individual with making informed choices and will provide clients with information on accessing the dispute resolution process.

Client Responsibilities

Successful outcomes are only attainable when everyone works together with the respect and courtesy appropriate for the workplace.

Clients are expected to participate and cooperate with the vocational rehabilitation process in a mutually respectful manner.

Inappropriate, hostile, or threatening behavior will not be tolerated. Language, conduct or aggressive or threatening communication that is not in alignment with what is reasonably expected in a community workplace setting, will result in a meeting being rescheduled.

- Clients who continue to use hostile, threatening or unreasonable language; or conduct themselves inappropriately, may result in the termination of client services.

Staff response to inappropriate behaviors

- Inappropriate behavior directed towards any VR staff member will not be permitted, regardless of the rationale.
 - Should VR staff observe or experience inappropriate behavior, these observations must be documented in case notes.
 - Counselors should be aware of cultural, trauma or disability-related barriers that may contribute to a challenging working relationship.
 - Any barriers that are identified should be documented.
- Repeated or sustained unprofessional, aggressive, threatening, or inappropriate behavior may result in file closure.

Prohibited Conduct:

Actions that may restrict access to or termination of program services may include:

- Use of profanity
- Raised voice or excessively loud speaking
- Disruptive conduct that interrupts or causes damage to the workspace
- Use of derogatory or discriminatory slurs
- Attacking, bullying, intimidating, harassing, or threatening others
 - This includes excessive, repeated telephone/video calls, emails, texts or visitations directed at the VR Counselor or VR Staff
- Conduct that may cause VR staff to experience undue stress or concern for their health or safety
- Engaging in harassing conduct as defined in [ORS 166.065](#).
- Engaging in telephonic harassment as defined in [ORS 166.090](#).

Continuation of Services

Should a client exhibit conduct considered by VR staff members to be inappropriate or otherwise not indicative of what would be expected in a community work environment; prior to a termination of services an individualized review of the situation must be conducted by the branch manager and agreed to by the Field Services Chief.

This review must include the following criteria:

- Was the conduct a result of a known disability documented by a qualified professional?
- Was the conduct a unique incident and would be considered atypical for the client's typical behavior?
- Can a reasonable accommodation be implemented, if necessary, to mitigate the inappropriate conduct?
 - Accommodations may include limiting meetings or client interaction to virtual or telephonic communications.

If VR determines that any client action or conduct should result in the suspension or reduction of services, the client will be provided with a Notice of Proposed Action (NOPA). The client will have all rights as afforded by this process.

Client Rights

- Participants that believe or observe staff behavior or conduct is unprofessional are encouraged to participate in the dispute resolution process. Please contact the VR Dispute Resolution Coordinator. (Maintaining a Professional Workplace, policy number 50.010.03) (See Filing Customer Service or Privacy Complaints or a Report of Discrimination, DHS 0170)
- Clients are provided with a copy of the VR Dispute Resolution Rights (form DHS 2872) at least during application, at eligibility, at plan, when services are denied, reduced, suspended, or ended, and at closure. The individual is encouraged to use this process in situations they believe VR staff has been unprofessional or inappropriate.

REFERENCES:

[ORS 166.065 Harassment](#)

[ORS 166.090 Telephonic harassment](#)

[Chapter 407 Division 12 Restricting Access to Department of Human Services Premises and Employees](#)

[Maintaining a Professional Workplace, State HR policy number 50.010.03](#)

[OAR 582 Division 20 - Dispute Resolution and Review of Determinations of Rehabilitation Services](#)

Field/stakeholder review] ☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, reviewed by VR Executive Team, Branch Managers, Direct Service Staff

If you have any questions about this action request, contact:

Contact(s): VR Policy Team	
Phone:	Fax:
Email: VR.Policy@odhsoha.oregon.gov	