

Veteran Readiness & Employment Service Participant Guide



National Contact Center New Hire Challenge Training

OTED Training

June 2020

Lesson Plan

Duration: 1 hours

TMS: # 4644636

Audience: This lesson is intended for experienced Public Contact Representatives (PCRs) within VBA's National Call Centers (NCCs) however, it is also suitable for any new or experienced VA employee desiring information on this subject.

Purpose: This lesson provides VA employees assisting the public with an opportunity to enhance their knowledge on this topic. It fulfills the training requirement outlined in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for new hires in the National Training Curriculum (NTC).

Objectives: Upon completing this lesson, trainees will be able to:

- Understand the mission of the VR&E program
- Services offered by VR&E
- Eligibility Requirements
- The five (5) track options
- Information relating to Revolving Fund Loans (RFLs)
- Explain Chapter 36, Education & Career Counseling eligibility criteria and application process
- Locate VR&E Chapter 36 resources and provide appropriate resources to callers
- Clarify which service applicants are requesting and make necessary referrals.

References:

VIDEO

- VA Educational and Vocational Counseling Program
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXtG-LkPqH4&feature=youtu.be>
Running time: 00:14:26
- "Voc Rehab In Less Than 5 Minutes!" [video](#)
Running time: 00:05:00

KM ARTICLE

- [Fact Sheet Chapter 31](#)
- [Five Tracks to Employment Fact Sheet](#)
- [Revolving Fund Loan Ready Reference](#)
- [VRE Subsistence Allowance Rate Tables](#)

- [Fact Sheet Chapter 36](#)

Veteran Readiness & Employment Participant Guide

- [Vet Success on Campus Fact Sheet](#)
- www.va.gov/careers-employment/education-and-career-counseling/

CPKM:

- [M21-1, Part IX, Subpart i, Chapter 1, Section A - Veteran Readiness and Employment \(VR&E\) Eligibility](#)

INTERNET:

- [Veteran Readiness & Employment](#)
- [Veteran Readiness & Employment Intranet Website](#)

FORMS:

- [VA form 28-1900](#), Disabled Veterans Application for Veteran Readiness
- [VA form 28-8890](#), Important Information About Veteran Readiness Benefits
- [VA form 28-8832](#), Education/Vocational Counseling Application
- [VA form 28-0588](#), VA Veteran Readiness - Getting Ahead After You Get Out

Introduction to Veteran Readiness and Employment Service

The Veteran Readiness and Employment Service (VR&E) Program is authorized by Congress under Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 31. You may hear Veteran Readiness & Employment Service referred to as VR&E or Chapter 31. The VR&E program assists Veterans with service-connected disabilities to prepare for, find, and keep suitable jobs. VR&E also offers services for Veterans with service-connected disabilities that are so severe that they cannot immediately consider work. These services are to provide these Veterans' abilities to live as independently as possible.

VA evaluates eligible Veterans to determine if they need VR&E services to help overcome barriers to employment. Depending on an individual's needs, the VA may provide the following VR&E services:

- an evaluation of the individual's abilities, skills, and interests
- assistance in finding and maintaining suitable employment
- Veteran counseling and planning
- an individualized readiness plan within one of the five service delivery tracks designed to help meet goals
- training, such as:
 - on-the-job and work experience programs, and
 - certificate, two- or four-year college or technical programs
- supportive services and additional counseling, and
- a program of services to assist in achieving independence in daily living.

Eligibility

Veteran Readiness & Employment Participant Guide

Veterans who served in the Armed Forces on or after February 16, 1940 and were discharged or released from military service under other than dishonorable conditions may be entitled to VR&E.

Veteran eligibility criteria:

- a SC disability evaluated at 20 percent disabling or more, and an employment handicap (determined by VR&E), OR
- a SC disability evaluated at 10 percent disabling, and a *serious* employment handicap (determined by VR&E).

An employment handicap is an impairment of a Veteran's ability to prepare for, obtain, and retain employment consistent with his or her abilities, aptitudes, and interests. The impairment must result in substantial part from a service-connected disability. For example, a Veteran is service connected 20% for a knee condition was a long-distance truck driver and loaded and unloaded the truck. However, because of the knee condition, the Veteran is no longer able to do that job.

A serious employment handicap is a significant impairment of a Veteran's ability to prepare for, obtain, or retain employment consistent with his or her abilities, aptitudes, and interests. The serious employment handicap must result in substantial part from a service-connected disability. For example, a Veteran is 10% service-connected for carpal tunnel syndrome and the Veteran was a data transcriber. Due to the carpal tunnel syndrome, the Veteran can no longer perform at a productive level as a data transcriber. Eligibility criteria for VR&E are based on the date the original application for benefits under 38 U.S.C Chapter 31 was received from the Veteran.

- been discharged or released from the military service under other than dishonorable conditions;
- filed the application, VA Form 28-1900. If a Veteran or service member is interested in counseling only, he/she must complete VA Form 28-8832
- a memorandum rating for VR&E purposes if the Veteran is not in receipt of compensation.

Eligibility Time Period

Generally, a Veteran must complete a VR&E program within twelve (12) years from separation from military service **or** twelve (12) years from the date VA notifies the Veteran of a compensable service-connected disability.

Depending on the length of the program needed, Veterans may be provided up to 48 months of full-time services or their part-time equivalent. These limitations may be extended in certain circumstances; i.e., a Veteran with a serious employment handicap may be granted an extension of the eligibility termination date and/or additional months of benefits.

Knowledge Check

What are the two types of employment handicaps used when determining eligibility for VR&E?

Application Process

In Public Contact, there are 3 options available to you when helping an individual apply for VR&E.

- 1) PCRs may have the resources to refer an individual directly to VR&E. If this is the case, direct your inquirer to your local VR&E office.
- 2) If the individual is ready to file, and a VR&E representative is not readily available for a referral, you may assist by helping the Veteran or Servicemember complete the applicable form, and fax the completed and signed form to the appropriate SOJ or submit to your local VR&E office.
- 3) If the individual provides intent to file but is unable to complete one of the above options during the interview, document the Request for Application (RFA) on VA Form 27-0820, *Report of General Information* and route form in accordance with the [0820 Routing Procedures](#). In addition, ensure the Veteran receives the applicable form along with the address and fax number where the completed form should be sent.
- 4) Veterans may also apply for VR&E via [VA.gov](#).

Application Forms

There are multiple VR&E forms available for Veterans and Servicemembers:

- [VA Form 28-1900](#), *Disabled Veterans Application for Veteran Readiness*, is the application supplied to Veterans with a notification of a Combined Service-Connected Rating of 10% or more. This is the disabled Veteran's form to apply for Veteran Readiness.
- [VA Form 28-8890](#), *Important Information about Veteran Readiness Benefits*, is supplied alongside 28-1900 as an informative and instructional guide to assist a Veteran applying for Veteran Readiness.
- [VA Form 28-0588](#), *VA Veteran Readiness – Getting Ahead After You Get Out*, is for Servicemembers who have a disability that began or became worse during active duty and who have not yet received a Service-Connected Disability Rating.
- [VA Form 28-8832](#), *Educational/Veteran Counseling Application*, is the application for eligible Servicemembers, Veterans, and dependents applying for educational counseling. This application is specifically for counseling; VR&E must be applied for on VA Form 28-1900.

Applications are processed at the Regional Office of Jurisdiction.

Five Tracks to Employment

After the VRC makes an entitlement determination, the Veteran and counselor work together to select a VR&E program track leading to employment or independent living goal.

- Re-employment is designed for those individuals who wish to return to work with a former employer. Service may include job accommodations or modifications.
- Rapid Access to Employment is designed for Veterans who already possess most of the necessary skills to compete for suitable employment opportunities and wish to obtain employment as soon as possible. Service may include resume development or job search assistance.
- Self-employment is designed for individuals who have limited access to traditional employment, need flexible work schedules, or need a more accommodating work environment due to their disabling conditions or other life circumstances. Service may include development of a business plan.
- Employment through long-term services is for those individuals who need specialized training and/or education to obtain and maintain suitable employment. Service may include on-the-job training, vocational, or technical school.
- Independent Living Services are for those individuals whose disabilities are so severe that they are currently unable to pursue an employment goal. These individuals may need rehabilitation services to live more independently and to increase their potential to return to work. Service may include living skills, training, or assistive technology.

Revolving Fund Loans (RFL)

A revolving fund loan (advance) is a non-interest loan from the revolving fund (general fund for VR&E). A revolving fund loan is established to provide advances to Veterans approved for VR&E (Chapter 31) who would otherwise be unable to begin or continue in a rehabilitation program without such assistance.

RFL Eligibility Requirements

- Must be a Veteran for whom an individualized Written Readiness Plan, Individualized Extended Evaluation Plan, or Individualized Independent Living Plan has been prepared; and
- The Veteran and VA staff must have agreed on the terms and conditions of the plan.

Veteran Readiness & Employment Participant Guide

In addition, the following conditions must be met:

- The purpose of the advance must be clearly and directly related to beginning, continuing, or reentering a rehabilitation program
- The Veteran would otherwise be unable to begin, continue, or reenter his or her rehabilitation program
- The advance does not exceed either the amount needed, or twice the monthly subsistence allowance for a Veteran without dependents in a full-time institutional training
- The Veteran has elected, or is in receipt of, subsistence allowance

Conditions that Prohibit Issuance of RFL an Advance

- The Veteran has not fully repaid a previous RFL advance
- The Veteran does not agree to the terms and conditions for repayment
- The Veteran will not be eligible in the future for payments of pension, compensation, subsistence allowance, educational assistance, or retired pay.

How RFL Loan Advance Amounts are Determined

- A VR&E Counselor in the VR&E Division will determine the amount of the advance.
- Loans will be made in multiples of \$10.00.

How RFL Loan Advance Amounts are Repaid

- The VR&E staff member approving the advance determines the rate of repayment.
- The amount advanced is repaid in monthly installments from future VA payments for compensation, pension, subsistence allowance, educational assistance allowance, or retired pay.
- The monthly rate of repayment may not be less than 10 percent of the amount advanced unless the monthly benefit against which the advance is being offset is less than that amount.

If the Veteran wishes to repay the balance of the debt, the payment is made to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and provided to the Regional Office of Jurisdiction.

Knowledge Check

What four (4) forms are available to apply for VR&E?

What are the five (5) tracks to employment?

Introduction to Chapter 36 Benefits

When you think about VR&E, you may think of Chapter 31 benefits for disabled Veterans to overcome an employment handicap or gain independence. Did you also know that VR&E administers Chapter 36, Educational and Career Counseling? Chapter 36 is a program that offers free Education and Career Counseling services to eligible individuals.

Before we get started, let's watch an introductory video on Chapter 36 from va.gov

Additional Chapter 36 Benefits Information

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Education and Career Counseling Program (Chapter 36) supports transitioning Servicemembers, Veterans, and qualified dependents. The program offers personalized career counseling to help achieve goals and ensure the most effective use of VA benefits. The program is administered by VA's VR&E program.

Services include:

- Career choice assistance to help participants understand the best career options based on interests and skills.
- Benefits coaching to provide guidance on VA benefits and resources to achieve education and career goals.
- Personalized support by way of academic or adjustment counseling and support to help remove any barriers to success.

The VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC) program operates in conjunction with Chapter 36. The VSOC program helps Servicemembers, Veterans, and eligible dependents succeed in their educational goals by providing on-campus benefits assistance and counseling. The goals of the program are to help participants complete their education and move on to viable careers.

Information Available Online for Chapter 36

There are several online resources available to assist individuals seeking Chapter 36 benefits. First, at the beginning of this lesson, you reviewed the online video on Chapter 36 benefit and should provide that official YouTube video when asked.

VA has placed information about Chapter 36 online at www.va.gov under the Careers and Employment section of the website. <https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/education-and-career-counseling/>

If your caller is eligible for Chapter 36, then they will also have access to the online assessment tool, CareerScope. CareerScope is a free aptitude test that provides users with recommendations based on aptitude test results. Those results may show careers or occupations that have the most overlap with the tested skills. Users are encouraged to review their results with Chapter 36 VR&E counselors for additional questions. The CareerScope link is available on the VA.gov chapter 36 webpage or directly at: <https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/careerscope-skills-assessment/>

Chapter 36 Procedural Guidance

PCRs must advise individuals who wish to apply for Chapter 36 benefits to submit VA Form 28-8832, Educational/Vocational Counseling Application, and provide options to obtain and submit the form:

- Claimants may apply online through VA.gov. PCRs must provide instructions on eBenefits accounts and application procedures, as needed.
- PCRs may mail/fax/email the application form or provide instructions for download and provide the return instructions in accordance with KM article Centralized Mail Processing Initiative.

For individuals currently in receipt of Chapter 36 benefits who need assistance with the program, PCRs must refer the individual to his/her VR&E counselor.

For individuals who have questions about their VA education benefits outside the scope of what the NCC/PCT can provide, as opposed to VR&E benefits, PCRs must refer the individual to the Education Call Center by providing the telephone number (1-888-442-4551) and offering to transfer.

Required PCR Actions

- When a caller has a question about the program, services provided or eligibility requirements, the PCR must:
 - Answer all directly asked questions to include an overview of the program, list of services offered through VR&E
 - Advise callers of the eligibility requirements
 - Advise callers to apply online. If they cannot apply online, offer to provide the application via email, fax or mail

When a caller has a specific question for their counselor that is not outlined in the above-mentioned information, the PCR may transfer the caller to their counselor. Locate the correct office by accessing the [VR&E Intranet VR&E Office Directory](#), selecting the state the Veteran resides and then the office closest to the Veteran's residence.

Knowledge Check

I have a friend who just got out of the military and wants to use his GI Bill. How does he apply for the education and career counseling I keep hearing about?

- A. Let me transfer you to Education Services for them to assist you.
- B. You must apply for VR&E, let me give you the application.
- C. I would be happy to help you with your benefits. To make sure I provide the correct information, I need to ask you a few questions. Are you requesting assistance with your GI Bill education benefits, or are you seeking education and career counseling?
- D. None of the above

You receive a call from Susie, the Veteran's dependent daughter. She has completed an online assessment from CareerScope but doesn't understand her results. Which VA benefit program is the best able to answer questions about the Career Scope Profile?

- A. Forever GI Bill or Education Service (Chapter 33)
- B. Educational and Career Counseling (Chapter 36)
- C. Veteran Readiness and Employment (Chapter 31)

D. Dependents Education Assistance (Chapter 35)

John has called you to get education benefit information. John has wanted to be a nurse practitioner for nearly 20 years but put his dream on hold and entered the Military straight from high school. He was able to earn his registered nursing credentials while he was in the service and wants to immediately start graduate school to obtain his nurse practitioner credentials. Which action do you take?

- A. Since John already knows what he wants to do, Chapter 36 is unnecessary.
- B. Chapter 33 is his best option to get his degree.
- C. Since John may still benefit from both Chapter 33 and Chapter 36, you decide to clarify his needs before explaining the program.
- D. You know a nurse practitioner who was laid off. John shouldn't take the risk and should avoid that degree program.

When a caller has a question about the program, services provided or eligibility requirements, what must the PCR do?