Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agencies and State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies furnish a wide variety of services to help people with disabilities return to work. These services are designed to provide the client with the training and other services that are needed to return to work, to enter a new line of work, or to enter the workforce for the first time.

VR Counselors help to evaluate strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities and career interests. They help clients get the education or training they need to get a good job, help with job seeking, and with education-related expenses. They can also assist with understanding how work will impact Social Security Benefits.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provides a path to:
- Education
- Higher income
- Better insurance and health care access
- Greater independence
- Improved confidence
- More friends
- Better quality-of-life
- More normal lifestyle
- A sense of purpose and identity
- More likely to get a transplant

Have a concern or grievance about your ESRD care?

To file a grievance about the care you are receiving at your dialysis facility, contact ESRD Network 16 at 800-262-1514.
VR services may include:

- Intensive Training
- Education
- Rehabilitation
- Career Counseling
- Job Placement Assistance
- Benefits Counseling

Some states also have separate VR agencies that serve individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

What steps should I take to learn more?

- Ask your dialysis social worker about VR and how your treatment plan, dialysis type and schedule can fit your work or school goals. The social worker can help you find a VR office or Employment Network (EN).
- Use the internet to find a service provider in your area https://choosework.ssa.gov/findhelp or call 866-968-7842.
- If getting to a VR office is too hard or costly, there are also “virtual” services listed on this website.

What can I expect at a VR appointment?

- Some offices have group orientations to describe services and provide a handbook
- After orientation you can fill out an application
- The agency will contact you and assign a counselor
- When you meet with the counselor be prepared to talk about how your kidney disease limits you from finding a job, and what help you need from them
- Your counselor will write an individualized plan for employment or education that states what you need to prepare to find, get, and keep a job
- Keep in regular contact with your counselor and be persistent
- Tell your dialysis social worker how your work with VR is going. Ask for their help if you need it to keep getting services to reach your work goals.

Talk to your social worker about your lifestyle goals, and he or she can help you get started.

Success stories from other kidney patients

“I worked with a vocational counselor, who assisted with my education and career, first as a schoolteacher, and later as a nurse. VR helped me to have a normal life.” – Nancy

“VR paid for most of my education, all of my books, and other expenses related to getting a college degree and ultimately a job after graduation from nursing school. Medicare continued to pay for my transplant medications beyond the usual 3 years after my kidney transplant, because of a Social Security Work Incentive that allows for continuation of benefits for those who remain active in VR.” – Esther

“Thanks to VR, my lifelong dream of attending college is fulfilled and I have a new lease on life. VR is making it possible for me to return to the workforce and continue to be the man my father exemplified.” – Gary

“My social worker encouraged me to pursue a degree through VR, and said I would make a great social worker. VR provided me with resources and a plan to reach my goals. I obtained my Associate’s Degree, Bachelor of Social Work Degree and Masters of Social Worker Degree through the VR program. I was able to keep my Medicare and Social Security Disability Income while completing school, even years after transplant. I have been a dialysis social worker for 13 years now, and my motto is to find and follow your purpose and thrive on.” - Michael