



# Vocational Rehabilitation

**Tips for Partnering with Local VR Offices**



## ESRD Network 18

### Tips for Partnering with Local VR Offices

- **Contact and build a relationship with VR counselors.** Share materials, such as the manual "[Effective Strategies for Improving Employment Outcomes for People with Chronic Kidney Disease](#)." You can use the "[Find Help](#)" directory for local VR offices, ENs, workforce ENs, Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) projects, and Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS).
- **Tell VR counselors** these things so they can help people on dialysis get and keep jobs:
  - **ESRD** means end stage of the kidney (kidney failure) not of the person. Those who do dialysis or have a transplant can live for decades.
  - Those with kidney failure may:
    - Do **hemodialysis (HD)** in a clinic or at home three or more times a week to remove toxins in the blood. Clinic or home HD can be scheduled to fit the work schedule.
    - Do **peritoneal dialysis (PD)** at home four or more times a day by hand or while sleeping using a machine to remove toxins in the blood. If needed during the workday PD can be done in any clean, private place. PD is work-friendly.
    - Have a **transplant** to replace the failed kidney. Transplant is a treatment, not a cure. People with transplant need jobs with health insurance to cover costly drugs.
  - **People on dialysis and with transplants can work.** If a job change is needed, it is often no or low cost (e.g., flex-time, time off for doctor/clinic visits, extra breaks or labor-saving equipment). They can be productive workers. Work helps patients stay healthier physically, mentally, socially and financially, have higher self-esteem, and an enhanced sense of well-being. The Social Security [Listing of Impairments](#) ("Blue Book") lists dialysis and the first-year post-transplant as being "severe enough to prevent any individual from doing any gainful activity." Any of those conditions qualify the person medically for disability benefits.
- **Meet face to face with your local VR counselors** at the dialysis clinic or in their office. Some dialysis clinics hold "VR Days" so VR counselors and/or Social Security work incentive coordinators (see "[Find Help](#)" directory) can visit with patients at the clinic to answer questions about Social Security benefits and work incentives.
- **Educate your staff** about VR resources and how key it is for people on dialysis to keep their appointments and follow the plan. Help staff see how key they are in asking patients about their goals, progress and encouraging them.
- **Post VR materials** in public areas of the clinic.
- **Educate dialysis & transplant patients** about the VR process
  - Referral
  - Orientation and receipt of the VR Handbook of Services
  - Application
  - Assignment to a counselor



- Eligibility
- Waiting list – priorities based on status, the order of selection and date of application
- If served, services based on counselor and client written plan
- If waitlisted, the requirement to refer and how private ENs can help
- **Ask patients to keep you informed** of VR activities, barriers, progress and help needs (e.g., rescheduling dialysis, communication with counselors, educating employers, coordination of care).

