



# Vocational Rehabilitation

**VR for People on Dialysis Living in Rural Areas**



## ESRD Network 18 VR for People on Dialysis Living in Rural Areas

Having chronic kidney disease has changed your life, but there are things you can do to reduce its impact on you. If you get SSI or SSDI and are 18 - 64, the TTW program may be for you. It offers incentives for those who want to work. There are sources of help even if you live in a rural area.

People living in cities and suburbs may not know where there are open jobs to fit their skills. Living in a rural area, you may know how many open jobs there are, where they are and what skills you'd need. Whereas people in urban areas can avoid telling an employer they are on dialysis, but if you live in a rural area, everyone may know you're on dialysis. If you do in-center dialysis, you may need to ask for a dialysis time or work schedule that fit together, or you may want to think about a home dialysis option. More companies allow people to work at home, you may want to ask your employer if you are able to.

Most employers know little about dialysis and may think those on dialysis can't work or would need costly job changes. You may need to inform them and self-advocate to get an offer for an open job you know you can do well. Your doctor and health care team can help you educate an employer. Public or private VR counselors can help you find work and educate employers too. You can find a state VR counselor or a counselor from a Social Security-approved EN from the [Choose Work](#) site.

Every state has public VR agencies that provide in-person counseling. Some VR counselors believe finding a ride to their office shows you're motivated to get a job. However, a large barrier for those in rural areas is that the closest VR office may be a long way from where you live and there may be no transportation services. If you don't have your own transportation, you may need to ask family or friends, people from your school or church, or you may need to post a 'ride needed' notice in a public place. If you ask someone to drive you, you may need to pay for the ride. If money is tight, you could offer to do an errand or chore in exchange for a ride. Some state VR agencies can help pay for transportation.

If getting to a VR office is too hard or costly, you might want to choose to work with a private Social Security-approved EN that offers 'virtual' counseling. Services often include career planning, job placement/job placement assistance, ongoing work support/work retention services, or an EN might even hire you. Counselors may use FaceTime, Skype or another program to 'meet' and counsel you. They may have online training and tools on their website to help you. This option can work well if you have internet access yourself or if you can access the internet through a friend. If there's a library in your area, it may have internet access. You can find an EN using the 'Choose Work Find Help' site linked above. Insert your ZIP code or city and state, check the 'Employment Network' box, and choose the 'virtual' option on the left side of the page. The program may switch to 'in person and virtual.' To keep from having to go through many pages, choose to see all listings (the default is 20/page). The list has contact information, website, who the EN serves, and what services it offers. In February 2018, a database search found 19 ENs that provide services 'virtually.' Those working with 900 or more clients include:

- [AAATakeCharge](#) is 'consumer-directed' and pays work-related expenses if working and earning enough
- [AAATakeCharge Milestone LLC](#) is 'consumer-directed' and pays work-related expenses if working or in school or training enough
- [Employment Options, Inc.](#) offers work at home options
- [National Telecommuting Institute, Inc.](#) has links to Land a Job and NTI@Home



**NOTE:** Work-related expenses might include transportation to work, a computer or phone used for work, child care or a home dialysis partner that lets you work, drugs to control your condition, and many more.

Rural people on dialysis and others with disabilities may need to look for other ways of working. Some start a business. According to the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), people in rural areas are twice as likely to be self-employed as others. Working for yourself allows you to make your own decisions, set your own schedule, save money on transportation if you work at home, and you may even keep SSI or SSDI if your income (and assets if on SSI) is within certain guidelines. The [ODEP](#) site has information and resources to help overcome barriers to working for yourself so you can consider this option with your counselor from VR or an EN. There is more than one way to get a job.

*To file a grievance, please contact HealthInsight ESRD Network 18 using our contact information below:  
700 N. Brand Blvd., Suite 405, Glendale, CA 91203, 888-268-1539, [www.esrdnetwork18.org](http://www.esrdnetwork18.org)*

