

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) School to Work Transition Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Question: Why does the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) refer to the people they work with as "job seekers"?**

Answer: BRS is mandated to help individuals with significant disabilities prepare for work, find work and keep the jobs they have. Just like the Department of Labor and other employment agencies, we refer to the people who come to us for services as "job seekers".

2. **Question: I know two students who are both eligible for BRS. Why aren't the same services provided for both students?**

Answer: When students who have a disability are in school, they may have a 504 Plan, an *Individualized* Health Care Plan (IHP) or, an *Individualized* Education Program (IEP) that provides services and supports that are tailored to their specific strengths, interests, preferences and needs. Even though two students may have the same diagnosis/disability and have similar interests, their IEP, IHP or 504 Plan may be completely different because they have different strengths, preferences, needs, supports and life circumstances.

BRS has a similar approach. The career plan or *Individualized* Plan of Employment (IPE) is a written plan outlining a job seeker's vocational goal, and the services needed to reach the goal, based upon each job seeker's strengths, needs, preferences and interests. These specific characteristics, as well as the assessments and other documentation that are gathered by the BRS counselor during eligibility determination, help to guide an IPE that is unique to each individual.

3. **Question: Does BRS pay for driver evaluations, driver's education or vehicle modifications?**

Answer: BRS considers a wide range of services to support competitive employment. Similar to the question above, the individual's strengths, needs, and preferences shape the transportation options that are developed in the employment plan.

When BRS is working with any job seeker, comparable benefits (resources, supports and funding already available to the job seeker/student) must be considered first. Additionally, the services must be:

- Necessary for an individual to enter or gain competitive employment; and
- The transportation needs cannot be met by public transit or other less costly means; and
- The service is part of a long-term plan that will meet the individual's transportation needs after BRS is no longer involved, and
- They are part of an individual's IPE

When the job seeker/student is still in school, the BRS counselor can help the student, family and school explore information and resources, including:

- Any driver training available through the school district

- BRS Fact Sheet – Cost of Vehicle Ownership/Modification <http://www.ct.gov/brs/lib/brs/pdfs/vehmodfactsheet.pdf>
- Transportation – Making Connections, Options and Resources in Connecticut for Individuals with Disabilities <http://www.ct.gov/connect-ability/lib/connect-ability/transportation/downloadbrochure.pdf>
- Getting on Board Guides <http://www.ct.gov/dot/cwp/view.asp?a=1386&q=417538>
- Connect-Ability website, Transportation tab <http://www.ct.gov/connect-ability/cwp/view.asp?a=4477&q=524770>
- The Kennedy Center – travel training <http://www.thekennedycenterinc.org/what-we-do/programs-services/mobility-services/travel-training.html>
- CT DMV Driver's manuals (audio version) <http://www.ct.gov/dmv/cwp/view.asp?a=2594&q=405106>
- The Easter Seals Mobility Center provides pre-driving screenings, as well as car and van evaluations, in order to determine if you can safely operate a motor vehicle. Anyone can make a referral to this program. There is a fee for this evaluation. http://ct.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=CTDR_Mobility_Center
- The Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services Driver Training Program also provides evaluation, training, testing, and licensing, based on the standards of visual ability required for driving. There is no fee for this evaluation. <http://www.ct.gov/brs/cwp/view.asp?a=3890&q=507852>
- Vehicle Modification Handbook <http://www.ct.gov/brs/lib/brs/pdfs/vehiclemodsbooklet.pdf>

When a job seeker is ready for competitive employment, and has worked with his/her BRS counselor to understand public transportation options, and the cost of vehicle ownership and maintenance, services related to transportation may be added to the employment plan.

4. **Question: Does BRS pay for college?**

Answer: BRS supports many different types of training to meet a job seeker's rehabilitation needs. Sometimes this training can include training in institutions of higher education.

Just like the answer to the question above, when BRS is working with any job seeker, comparable benefits (resources, supports and funding already available to the job seeker/student) must be considered first. These benefits may include family contributions, basic grant entitlement under student financial aid programs, private or institution-based scholarships, tuition waiver, work study and earnings.

When a BRS counselor and a job seeker have agreed upon a vocational goal and are considering training as a vocational rehabilitation service, they will also consider the following questions:

- Are there transferable skills that the individual can use, enhance or consider?
- Will the training program (or institutions of higher education) allow the individual to reach the agreed-upon employment goal?
- Is the real employment issue due to lack of training, or are there other, more fundamental issues that need to be addressed?
- Is the training program limited, both in time and cost, to what is reasonably necessary to achieve the employment goal?
- Is the job seeker likely to succeed in the training program being considered?

- If the training is in an institution of higher education or other program eligible for financial aid, has the individual applied for financial assistance and is BRS participation limited to the “unmet need,” if any?
- If graduate training is under consideration, does the job seeker's disability prevent him/her from working simultaneously to taking graduate courses?

Resources the BRS counselor and the job seeker may use to consider training options are:

- BRS Policy Manual – Chapter III, Section 4 (a)
Training <http://www.ct.gov/brs/lib/brs/manual/policymanualcomplete.pdf>
- The College to Career Planning Tool outlines the expectations BRS has for job seekers with an employment plan that includes postsecondary education <http://www.ct.gov/brs/lib/brs/pdfs/guidepostdocs/BRSCollegeToCareerPlanningTool.pdf>
- Are You Ready for College? <http://www.ct.gov/brs/lib/brs/pdfs/guidepostdocs/AreYouReadyforCollege.pdf>
- Teaching Children "Survival" Skills for Adulthood, A Wake-Up Call for Parents <http://www.ct.gov/brs/lib/brs/pdfs/guidepostdocs/AWakeUpCallForParentsSurvivalSkillsChecklist.pdf>
- ADA vs 504 <http://www.ithaca.edu/sds/docs/IDEAVS504.pdf>
- Federal Financial Aid and College: An Overview for Students with Disabilities <http://www.ct.gov/brs/lib/brs/pdfs/guidepostdocs/BFinancialAidExcerpt.pdf>

5. **Question:** Does BRS have a "program" that a student/young adult could participate in during the day?

Answer: BRS helps job seekers who have disabilities prepare for and find jobs in the competitive workforce. Depending upon the job seeker's skills, preferences and needs, the job may be full-time or part-time. Some jobs may be 9-5, Monday through Friday or the position could be second or third shift and include weekends. Part of the planning process will include answering questions about transportation and other family considerations. There are no "programs" because each employment plan is based upon the job seeker's individual skills and needs and the employer's requirements for the job.

6. **Question:** Can BRS get a student/young adult a job in the summer?

Answer: Paid employment while a student is still in school has been shown to be the best indicator of obtaining paid employment as an adult. BRS always encourages students to take on responsibility as early as possible and summer employment is a good way to start learning employment skills. Networking (letting family, friends and others in the community know you are looking for work) is the way most job seekers find employment and is usually the way most people find their first jobs. If a student has been found eligible for BRS services, their employment plan may include summer employment to help assess the student's skills or prepare for skill building when they are in school. In addition to networking with the student and their family, BRS may also contract with a community provider to help find summer employment.