

# Thinking Smart about Voc Rehab (Chapter 31)



Developed by student veteran leaders, the following recommendations are designed to assist fellow student veterans who are considering Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (Chapter 31) benefits.

## a) APPLYING FOR VR&E BENEFITS

- **To be eligible as a veteran**, you must have an other than dishonorable discharge, and a VA service-connected disability rating of at least 10%.<sup>1</sup>
- **To apply**, visit the **eBenefits website** and select “**Apply**.”<sup>2</sup>
- Select “**VR&E benefits**” (under Education and Training) and select the benefit for which you would like to apply.<sup>2</sup>
- After applying, you will **receive a letter**, and if eligible, a date for an **orientation session and assessment**.<sup>2</sup>

## b) PREPARING FOR THE ORIENTATION AND ASSESSMENT

**VR&E is not an educational program; it is designed to help you gain employment. With that in mind:**

- **Do your homework.** Research jobs, educational programs, and labor statistics.
- Have a plan. Know **what career** you would like to enter, and **what level of education is required** to meet the entry-level qualifications for this job/career.
- **VR&E benefits can be denied** for many reasons. Be smart about your career choice. **Ask yourself:**
  - Would my **service-connected disability prevent me** from meeting job expectations? Would the career I’ve chosen **aggravate my disability**? (e.g., if you have a back injury, don’t choose a career that requires heavy lifting. If you’re not employable in a certain job, VR&E likely won’t support that path).
  - What is the **outlook for my career choice, over the next several years?** What do the labor statistics say? (VR&E is designed to help you secure a job – the outlook for your career needs to be strong).
- **Be realistic** about your career goals.
- **Dress to impress**, as you would for a job interview. Business formal dress is recommended.

## c) THE ASSESSMENT

- After the orientation session, a VR&E counselor will meet with you individually to **assess your interests and skills**, and determine if you are **entitled to receive VR&E benefits**.<sup>1</sup>
- Entitlement to VR&E benefits depends on your **disability rating**, your **employment handicap** (how your disability affects your ability to obtain/keep a job), and the basic time period of eligibility for VR&E services.<sup>1</sup>

## d) THE REHABILITATION PLAN

- If you are approved, you and your counselor will:
  - Discuss programs and services needed to support your career goals,<sup>2</sup> **which may include higher education**, as a step towards employment.
  - **Develop and sign an individualized rehabilitation plan**, describing the resources and criteria that will be used to help you meet your goals.<sup>2</sup>
- Ensure that this plan is exactly what you want, and that you understand your responsibilities, before you sign. **Once signed, plans can be difficult to change.**

## e) ADDITIONAL TIPS AND HELPFUL WEBSITES

- If you will be transitioning from your GI Bill benefits to VR&E benefits to attend school, ensure you have at least **one day of GI Bill benefits remaining**; by doing so, VR&E will *hopefully* pay the housing allowance based on the zip code of your school.
- **Keep copies** of your plan and VR&E records (helpful if you move or switch VR&E counselors at some point).
- **eBenefits:** <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov>
- **VR&E Information (as referenced above):**
  - 1) [https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/eligibility\\_and\\_entitlement.asp](https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/eligibility_and_entitlement.asp)
  - 2) [https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/application\\_roadmap.asp](https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/application_roadmap.asp)
- **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics:** <https://www.bls.gov>