

# **DE/LEA/IDB/IVRS Collaboration**

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

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## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The [US Department of Education's recent letter](#), directed to special education and vocational rehabilitation staff, highlights the history and importance of collaboration in the transition process. In support of the collaboration needed for successful transition planning, this document provides a list of commonly used acronyms, frequently asked questions around this collaboration and responses to these questions. The Table of Contents below outlines the specific questions with direct links to the answers.

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## Commonly Used Acronyms

<b>AEA</b>	Area Education Agency
<b>CRP</b>	Community Rehabilitation Program
<b>DE</b>	Department of Education
<b>ESYS</b>	Extended School Year Services
<b>HCBS</b>	Home and Community Based Services
<b>IEP</b>	Individualized Education Program
<b>IESBVI</b>	Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired
<b>IPE</b>	Individualized Plan for Employment
<b>IDB</b>	Iowa Department for the Blind
<b>IVRS</b>	Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services
<b>LEA</b>	Local Education Agency
<b>MOA</b>	Memorandum of Agreement
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>PE</b>	Potentially Eligible
<b>Pre-ETS</b>	Pre-Employment Transition Services
<b>SSA</b>	Social Security Administration
<b>TAP</b>	Transition Alliance Program
<b>VR</b>	Vocational Rehabilitation (refers to both IVRS and IDB)
<b>WIOA</b>	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

# IVRS/IDB Distinction

## What is IVRS?

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) is a state agency that assists individuals with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, retain, and advance in employment. For an individual who has been determined eligible, an individualized program is developed to deliver employment services based on an individualized plan. The mission of IVRS is to provide expert, individualized services to Iowans with disabilities to achieve their independence through successful employment and economic support.

## What is the application and eligibility process for IVRS?

Students with disabilities (including students with an IEP, 504 Plan, or other students who have a disability that may not have a plan) can begin working with IVRS at age 14 either as PE or IVRS eligible. PE students need to complete a [Pre-ETS Agreement](#) to participate in Pre-ETS with IVRS or any contracted transition programs with IVRS. Students who have intensive needs and will need individualized IVRS services to be successful in employment should complete an [application](#) for services. IVRS has 60 days to determine a student's eligibility for services. Eligibility is based on the student's disability and how this impacts him/her in employment.

## What is IDB?

The [Iowa Department for the Blind](#) (IDB) is a state agency that assists individuals who are blind or have low vision, including serving individuals who are deaf-blind and individuals who have additional disabilities to prepare for, obtain, retain and advance in employment. The mission of the IDB is to empower blind Iowans to be gainfully employed and live independently. IDB also operates the Iowa Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, which provides educational materials in alternative formats to K-12 students and literacy and STEM focused programming for youth and families. If a student is blind or has low vision resulting in eligibility for IDB services combined with other disabilities, IDB will provide the needed VR services.

## What is the application and eligibility process for IDB?

Students with disabilities (including students with an IEP, 504 Plan, or other students who have a disability that may not have a plan) can begin working with IDB at age 14 either as potentially eligible (PE) or IDB-VR eligible. PE students need to complete a [Pre-ETS Agreement](#) to participate in Pre-ETS with IDB. Students who have intensive needs and will need individualized vocational rehabilitation services to be successful in employment should complete an application for services.

Individuals wishing to access either pre-employment transition services or vocational rehabilitation services can [submit a referral](#). IDB has 60 days to determine a student's eligibility

for services. Eligibility is based on the student's disability and how this impacts him/her in employment. Blind, low vision, or print disabled lowans of any age may apply to become patrons of our library and receive books, magazines, newspapers, educational toys and games, and braille literacy support and resources.

## What is the difference between IESBVI and IDB?

The Iowa Educational Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides a statewide system of classroom-based instruction, orientation, consultative and evaluation services in the areas of vision, learning media, and assistive technology which support the Individual Education Plans of students attending school in their local school districts. IESBVI services are accessed by students receiving vision services in school districts through graduation.

The Iowa Department for the Blind administers the vocational rehabilitation program for individuals who are blind or have low vision and operates the Iowa Library for the Blind and Print Disabled. IDB and IESBVI are vital partners in preparing students who are blind or have low vision for a successful future beyond high school.

*Going forward in this FAQ, both IVRS and IDB will be referred to as VR.*

## General Terminology

### What is WIOA?

WIOA is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. WIOA is designed to strengthen and improve our nation's public workforce system and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers, and help employers hire and retain workers. WIOA core partners are Iowa Workforce Development, IVRS, IDB and Adult Education and Literacy. Additional information about the impact of WIOA on schools and VR can be found on the DE's [Secondary Transition web page](#).

### What is a PE student versus VR eligible student?

A Potentially Eligible (PE) student is an individual with a disability between the ages of 14 and 21 who is in a recognized educational program receiving special education services under an IEP, or who is covered under the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, regardless of whether the student has applied for or been determined eligible for VR services. A PE student has not been determined eligible for VR services, but can participate in Pre-ETS.

A completed Pre-ETS Agreement and documentation verifying the student is on an IEP or covered under the provisions of Section 504 needs to be provided to VR prior to the student participating in Pre-ETS.

A VR eligible student is a student who has applied and been determined eligible for VR services. A VR eligible student can participate in Pre-ETS as well as other individualized direct VR services as outlined in the student's IPE.

A PE student must begin Pre-ETS services prior to being placed on an IVRS waiting list in order to continue receiving those Pre-ETS services. IDB does not have a waiting list for services.

## What is a Pre-ETS Agreement?

A Pre-ETS Agreement outlines which of the Pre-ETS activity areas in which a student is interested in participating with VR. If the student has a guardian, then the guardian also needs to provide input and sign the agreement. The Pre-ETS Agreement needs to be completed prior to the student participating in the first activity with VR staff. The agreement is not an application for VR services.

## Service Delivery

### Do VR services cost anything?

No, VR is a state agency and there is no cost to participate in services.

### How long will VR work with students?

VR will provide Pre-ETS to potentially eligible students until they no longer need these services or until the individual no longer meets the definition of student with a disability. VR will work with VR eligible individuals until they are in their long-term career goal for at least 90 days.

### How do services differ between VR and the School District?

IVRS and the DE have an [MOA](#) that describes the responsibilities of both education and IVRS staff in providing transition services to students with disabilities. IDB and the DE also have an MOU describing the responsibilities of education and IDB staff in providing transition services. There are some services that can be provided by either the school or VR staff. The use of the Local School Plan can help to guide decisions around which entity provides which services. Each district develops a plan, with VR staff and other partners, that supports the individualized needs of the students in the district.

### Does VR pay for psychological evaluations for students in high school?

VR is able to pay for any testing or assessments needed to determine eligibility for services through VR. VR does not pay for testing needed for eligibility for other programs/entities.

## **Does VR pay for driver's education?**

VR can assist with costs for driver training related to a student's disability. Students participating in a driver training program should discuss options available through their high school driver training program provider and should access those options prior to requesting alternative driver training programs. If an accommodation and/or modification is required, requested and the driver's education training program is unable to provide the request, these services can be included in the student's IPE, as long as these are not the legal responsibility of another entity.

## **What is SSA benefits counseling and why is it important for students with disabilities?**

Students receiving an SSA benefit may have questions regarding how work will impact their SSA cash benefits and the accompanying Medicare or Medicaid health insurance. SSA provides many work incentives that allow an individual to work and continue receiving benefits or gradually transition off benefits. VR has trained benefits counselors across Iowa who can provide benefits counseling to students with disabilities.

## **Can a student receive tuition assistance for postsecondary training through VR if they do not qualify for FAFSA and grants?**

VR funding for tuition assistance is not income based. VR services for postsecondary training assistance are based on unmet needs. Students who are eligible for FAFSA, even if they do not receive or accept any FAFSA funding, may be eligible, based on unmet needs, for VR funding. Any student who is attending a program that qualifies for FAFSA must provide a copy of their financial aid award letter regardless of whether or not they qualify for financial aid or private pay. Application for FAFSA must be completed annually.

All services provided by VR must be included on the individual's IPE and align with the individual's employment goal. Financial assistance is provided to eligible individuals participating in postsecondary education who are students in good standing and making satisfactory progress toward their employment goal.

## **General Collaboration with Schools and Others**

### **What is the difference between IEP and IPE?**

Public Law 108-446, known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), is federal legislation that was passed to ensure that children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that meets their unique needs.

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is defined as a written statement for each child with a disability that describes the student's special education program. For students who are 14 and older, this IEP includes goals, services, and activities that will help them to reach their postsecondary expectations in living, learning and working.

The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is a signed agreement between VR, the student and the student's guardian that outlines the specific job goal being pursued and the services required in order to be successful in preparing for, obtaining, maintaining or advancing in employment. The IPE is designed to initiate and carry out an individualized plan for employment consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests, and informed choice.

The IEP and the IPE should be aligned, which means that VR staff, school staff and student/family members should be working together in the development of each of these plans.

## **Are VR Counselors a part of the IEP team?**

YES! If a student is receiving Pre-ETS from a VR counselor or has an open VR file, then the VR counselor should be a part of the IEP team. If VR staff are unable to attend in person, attempts should be made to connect virtually or by phone. If that is not an option, school staff should gather information from VR prior to the meeting for inclusion in the conversation.

## **What is the Local School Plan and how is it developed?**

The Local School Plan outlines the responsibilities of the LEA, AEA, IVRS, IDB and other partners involved in providing Pre-ETS and other transition services within the district. As a part of the planning process, the Local School Team should identify services currently being provided, new and expanded services that may be provided by VR or other partners and any gaps in services that may exist. When gaps in services are found, the team should involve the area office supervisor for IVRS to discuss strategies and options for addressing these gaps.

## **Who is responsible for providing transition services for work when there are multiple entities involved?**

There is overlap between the transition services described in IDEA and the Pre-ETS services described in WIOA. The Local School Plan should outline roles for the delivery of these services. The district holds ultimate responsibility for transition for each student, but the collaboration with partners and programs can enhance and improve the services in order to meet the needs of students in the district.

## **How do we best work with other agencies such as CRPs and HCBS waiver providers in transition planning for youth with disabilities?**

Neither the Department of Education or VR are able to speak specifically about services that other entities may or may not provide, however, representatives from these programs can be a part of the Local School Planning team. Links to existing webinars about collaboration with CRPs and HCBS waiver providers can be found at the [Iowa Secondary Transition Learning Community Google Site](#).

## **How often should VR staff be in schools?**

This will vary depending on the size and needs within each school district. Conversations should be occurring during the local school planning meetings that address when and how services will be delivered.

## **What is the difference between TAP and IVRS?**

The Transition Alliance Program (TAP) is a joint project of a Community School District and IVRS. TAP provides year round services to youth with disabilities who are eligible and actively receiving IVRS services or Pre-ETS to Potentially Eligible students on an IEP or covered under the provisions of section 504. These services are provided through a service coordination model with a goal of obtaining competitive integrated employment and successful IVRS closure for eligible youth. TAP is funded jointly by the Community School District and IVRS as each entity is responsible for fifty percent of the cost of the program. Additional information about TAP can be found on the [IVRS website](#). Students involved with IDB may have access to TAP, if identified as a need on the IPE. Please see the MOA between IVRS and IDB for more information.

## **Are schools able to refuse to provide transition services?**

Transition services are determined by the IEP team. If, based on comprehensive assessment, a service is determined to be necessary for a student, the IEP team must determine who provides the service. If another entity is not providing the service, then a district must provide that service. Determination of needs and the services/supports to meet those needs must be a part of the IEP team process. These services and supports can include, as determined necessary by the IEP team, job coaching or transportation that occurs outside the typical school day.

## What resources can parents be provided regarding the transition planning process?

There are a number of resources available to parents around transition planning. The [DE](#), [IVRS](#), and [IDB](#) websites all have information about transition, including the MOAs between the DE and VR. The [Transition Iowa](#) website and [Iowa IDEA Information \(13\)](#) are additional resources with information around transition planning. The [FEP \(Family and Educator Partnership\)](#) and [ASK Resource Center](#) are both options for families to find support around special education, including secondary transition. Each AEA has resources specific to their region, as well. These can all be shared with families to help them learn more about services and options.

## Collaborative Service Delivery with Schools and Others

### Can school districts pay for transportation for Pre-ETS activities?

All Pre-ETS activities should be developed collaboratively through the Local School Plan. If VR is providing an activity that is a part of that plan and transportation is needed, the local school district can provide transportation.

### Can VR provide transportation assistance to students?

If a student has an open VR case file, it is allowable for VR to provide transportation services to enable the student to participate in a vocational rehabilitation service. The team should be looking to find sustainable options for transportation that empower the student to be as self-sufficient as they are able to be. VR is unable to provide transportation services to potentially eligible students.

### What is the difference between instructional training and job coaching?

Instructional training is training on employability skills provided to a student with a disability. Employability skills may include programming to develop social skills and independent living, such as communication and interpersonal skills, financial literacy, orientation and mobility skills, job seeking skills, understanding employer expectations for punctuality and performance, as well as other “soft” skills necessary for employment. This service is provided in the early stages of career exploration during the student’s transition process. The Local Education Agency (LEA) will provide and/or pay for instructional training when it is part of the instructional component of the IEP. Instructional training can take place during the school day, evenings, weekends or in the summer, as a part of Extended School Year Services (ESYS).

Job coaching includes but is not limited to intensive on-the-job training necessary to teach an employee both the job duties and job-related responsibilities, such as transportation, co-worker relationships, taking breaks and other responsibilities that assure job retention. Job coaching is provided when a student has been placed in his/her long-term employment goal. VR is able to assist with funding this service for a VR eligible student who has been placed in his/her long term career goal and who has job coaching identified as a needed service in his/her Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

## **Can VR set up a work experience for a student?**

IDEA requires IEP teams to provide a coordinated set of activities that will help a student move from school to post-school activities, including integrated employment. If, through comprehensive assessment, the IEP team determines the need for work experience, then it should be provided, as determined by the IEP team, which can include responsibilities agreed to by a community partner. If a partner is unable to provide the services as described, the team must reconvene to consider other options. Ultimately, the responsibility always remains with the district.

It is an option for VR staff to support districts in this work, but it should not be expected. The Local School Plan process is a great way to explore, discuss and define responsibilities such as these.

## **What is Customized Discovery (CD)?**

Customized Discovery (CD) is a person-centered approach that leads to a competitive integrated employment outcome. CD identifies an individual's skills, interests, abilities, conditions, contributions, and supports needed for successful community employment. The CD process consists of the following: determining a pathway to a career that focuses on the individual's interest, talents, and strengths; customizing a job in the community based on the information identified; and providing consultative support to ensure the individual is successful.

CD is appropriate for individuals who have the most significant needs, have not worked, worked primarily in segregated settings, or had little vocational success. Individuals who know their vocational goal are not appropriate for CD. High school students can participate in CD during their junior and senior year.

## **What are the high school's financial responsibilities when a student attends a 4+ program at a community college?**

4+ services are one option of a district's secondary program. The district must ensure the IEP is completed and appropriately implemented. The IEP team determines the goals and services that the student needs. The cost for books, supplies and other materials needed to provide FAPE must be covered by the district. Books, supplies and other materials purchased by the district are then the property of the district. General supplies are the responsibility of the student, the same as for students without disabilities.

The district has responsibility for transportation to location of program unless:

- Student is open-enrolled
- District opts to cover the living cost for the student on campus in lieu of providing transportation. This is a district decision.

If 4+ services are being provided at a community college, living on campus is a student choice and parent cost with 2 exceptions:

- Specially designed instruction related to living skills are necessary according to the IEP and residential costs are necessary to provide FAPE
- The program is too far away from home, as determined by the district, for the student to return home daily

Additional guidance around 4+ services can be found on the DE's [Secondary Transition web page](#).

## **What are the high school's financial responsibilities when a student attends the 4+ program, Young Adult Transition Program (YATP) at IDB?**

The [YATP](#) is designed to assist students in addressing unmet transition needs identified in the IEP. The financial responsibilities of the school district will depend on the individual student needs and are best addressed through consultation with the Education and Training Program Administrator at IDB.

## **What is Private Instruction and how do we best collaborate to provide services for students in non accredited, Competent Private Instruction and Independent Private Instruction?**

Families may choose to educate their children at home instead of sending them to a traditional public or nonpublic school. This is called home schooling. Families choose to home school for a variety of reasons. That is why the state of Iowa allows several educational options for home schooling:

- Full-time home school with the support of a certified teacher (Competent Private Instruction)
- Full-time home school without the support of a certified teacher (Competent Private Instruction or Independent Private Instruction)
- Part-time homeschool with part-time enrollment in a school district (Competent Private Instruction)
- Attendance at a non-accredited school (Competent Private Instruction)

If a student is dually enrolled and the student has an IEP, then the IEP team should be making the decision as to whether the service is needed. If transition services are needed, the school should provide those services. How and where the services are provided is up to the school.

If the student is in Independent Private Instruction, the student does not have an IEP, so there is no school responsibility. The family is responsible for needed transition services. For more information, please refer to the DE's web page for [Private Instruction](#).

## **Who do I contact if I have questions about this FAQ?**

For questions regarding IDB, please contact Keri Osterhaus at [keri.osterhaus@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:keri.osterhaus@blind.state.ia.us).

For questions regarding DE, please contact Kelsey Teeter at [kelsey.teeter@iowa.gov](mailto:kelsey.teeter@iowa.gov).

For questions regarding IVRS, please contact Mary Jackson at [mary.jackson@iwd.iowa.gov](mailto:mary.jackson@iwd.iowa.gov).