I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to provide direction for VR Staff and VR Contractors developing and implementing an Individualized Plan for in accordance with appropriate federal (e.g., Code of Federal Regulations [CFR]) and state law (i.e., Ohio Revised Code [ORC], Ohio Administrative Code [OAC]) Governor directives and executive orders, other governing agency (e.g., DAS, OBM) policy or guidance, and/or Director expectations.

Refer to the AWARE Manual for more detailed instructions regarding the management of cases in AWARE.

II. APPLICABILITY

This procedure applies to VR Staff and VR Contractors.

III. DEFINITIONS

Refer to “Vocational Rehabilitation Definitions” (80-VR-99.A).

IV. PROCEDURES

A. General

1. Refer to “Standard Expectations and Funding Information for Vocational Rehabilitation Policies and Procedures” (80-VR-98) for guidance on general expectations related to all VR policies and procedures.
2. “Transition Services” (80-VR-11-12) shall be followed for additional guidance and direction regarding the comprehensive assessment (CA) and development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for students with a disability (SWD) enrolled in a secondary educational institution.

3. The decision to approve an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is a non-delegable function that can only be performed by Qualified Rehabilitation Personnel (QRP) and shall be completed in a timely manner.

4. An IPE is not a contract or in any way contractually binding between the individual or OOD.

5. If the IPE or services outlined on the IPE violate any OOD policies, procedures, state or federal laws or regulations IPE or services may be considered void.

6. An overview of the requirements for an IPE is provided in the “Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program Overview” (80-VR-01.B).

B. Timeframes for the Development of the IPE

1. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall use the information identified through discussion of the “Points of Consideration for Fast Track” (80-VR-01-01.F), to determine if the individual is ready to immediately begin the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) process.

   a. If it is determined that “Fast Track” is not likely to be recommended, VR Staff or VR Contractors shall proceed with traditional VR services and processes.

2. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall develop the IPE for all individuals with open cases as soon as possible after the CA process is completed, but no later than 90 days after the date of eligibility determination or the date released from a statewide wait list, in the event that OOD is under an Order of Selection (OOS).

3. An extension may be added to the 90-day time frame in situations of exceptional and/or unforeseen circumstances beyond OOD’s control. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall complete the items below when an extension is determined necessary.

   a. Contact the individual prior to the end of the 90-day deadline to explain why the IPE cannot be completed and request their agreement to a specific extension date.

   b. If the individual is unreachable after a minimum of two (2) attempts, in the individual’s preferred mode of communication, VR Staff or VR Contractor should follow direction in “Case Closure” (80-VR-02-01).

   c. Complete the “Plan Development Extension” page in AWARE and send the “Time Extension for IPE Development” letter (80-VR-08-01.A) to the individual.

      i. The reason for the extension and deadline (i.e. specific date) for developing the IPE shall be clearly documented in the letter.

      ii. If the extension is not completed prior to the 90-day deadline, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall create an AWARE Case Note documenting the reason and enter the extension date in AWARE.
a) If subsequent time extensions are needed, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall contact the individual prior to the end of the previous extension date and follow the requirements above in Section B.3

b) If the individual requires multiple time extensions, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall evaluate the individual’s progress with services and may follow direction in “Case Closure” (80-VR-02-01), when appropriate.

C. IPE Development

1. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall ensure an IPE is developed and implemented for each eligible individual with an open case.

   a. Individuals may develop their IPE:

      i. independently, without assistance from VR Staff, VR Contractor or other entity; or

      ii. with assistance:

         a) by a VR Staff or VR Contractor;

         b) by an authorized representative as appropriate;

         c) by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor who is not employed by OOD;

         d) by a disability advocacy organization; and/or

         e) by other resources.

2. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall complete the CA process, prior to the development of the IPE, to determine the nature and scope of the individual’s VR needs and to assist with the selection of an employment outcome, per “Comprehensive Assessment” (80-VR-04 and 80-VR-04-01).

   a. If it is determined that the individual is ready to begin the Fast Track process for the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) immediately, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall complete a justification in an AWARE Case Note titled “Fast Track” rather than completing the CA Process Summary Case Note prior to the development of the IPE.

   b. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall not support the selection of an employment outcome in the medical marijuana industry.

3. In addition to the direction provided in the “Comprehensive Assessment Procedure” (80-VR-04-01), VR Staff or VR Contractor shall document the discussion of the individual’s ability or inability to contribute to the services listed in the “Employment Goal Reason Narrative” field on the IPE.

D. Required Contents of the IPE

1. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall complete the “Plan Layout” page in AWARE and ensure that the items listed below are included.
a. A competitive integrated employment outcome identified during the CA process that is consistent with the individual’s unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice including the need for supported employment, if applicable, of the individual (in the most integrated setting possible consistent with the informed choice of the individual) and is appropriate given the current local and/or state labor market.

i. Student with a Disability (SWD) – VR Staff or VR Contractor may list “Vocational Exploration of [name of employment outcome(s)]” to indicate a projected employment outcome when a specific employment outcome has not been identified and shall follow additional direction provided in “Transition Services” (80-VR-11-12).

ii. Youth with a Disabilities (YWD) - VR Staff or VR Contractors may list “Vocational Exploration of [name of employment outcome(s)]” when the individual is enrolled in a two- or four-year accredited, postsecondary institution but has not declared a major or has not identified a specific employment outcome. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall also follow the additional direction provided in “Postsecondary Training” (80-VR-11-05).

a) In order to avoid an excessive period of time in a “Vocational Exploration of [name of employment outcome(s)]” plan, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall amend the YWD’s IPE to indicate a specific employment outcome as soon as possible, but at minimum prior to the:

1) YWD completing more than half of the program requirements (i.e., prior to entering second academic year of a two-year program, prior to entering third academic year of a four-year program); or

2) YWD’s 25th birthday, whichever occurs first.

2.1 When a YWD reaches their 25th birthday, they are no longer eligible to receive services under the IPE listing “Vocational Exploration of [name of employment outcome]. In this instance, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall interrupt services until a specific employment outcome is identified and listed on the IPE.

b) When a YWD is unable to identify a specific employment outcome, as required above, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall meet with the YWD to discuss, at minimum, the following:

1) the appropriateness of postsecondary education, per “Postsecondary Training” (80-VR-11-05);

2) alternative vocational or service options per, “Vocational Rehabilitation Services” (80-VR-11) and subsequent procedures; and

3) case closure, per “Vocational Rehabilitation Case Closure” (80-VR-02-01), when appropriate.

iii. For an employment outcome of self-employment, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall follow the direction provided in “Self-Employment” (80-VR-16- and 80-VR-16-01) prior to the completion of the IPE.
a) VR Staff or VR Contractor shall check the box indicating “Self-Employment” on the Plan page in AWARE regardless of OOD’s financial support of the individual’s business.

iv. For an employment outcome of supported employment, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall follow the direction provided in “Supported Employment” (80-VR-11-03) prior to the completion of the IPE.

a) VR Staff or VR Contractor shall check the box indicating “Supported Employment” on the Plan page in AWARE.

b. Current local and/or state labor market information shall be documented in the “Employment Goal Reason Narrative” section of the IPE to support the viability of the individual’s selected employment outcome.

i. Labor market information (LMI) may come from O*NET, Ohio Labor Market Information, Ohio Means Jobs, Employer Partner Job Posting List, or other reputable resources. Refer to “Informed Choice” (80-VR-07 and 80-VR-07-01) for further direction.

c. Services necessary for the individual to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain their employment outcome.

i. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall include necessary services on the IPE grid, in Section 2, which includes:

a) services provided through comparable benefit(s) and/or individual contribution (e.g. medical/psychological treatment, medication);

b) maintenance services (e.g., clothing, transportation) needed for the individual to participate in services;

c) on-going support services for individuals in supported employment as required in “Supported Employment” (80-VR-11-03); and

d) assistive technology, and/or personal assistance services, and training in the management of these services, if appropriate.

ii. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall also document they have informed individuals that services will be delivered in an integrated setting and will be consistent with the informed choice of the individual, unless a specific justification is otherwise provided.

iii. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall discuss possible employment outcomes available from the “Employer Partner Jobs List” list as appropriate.

d. Timelines for the achievement of the employment outcome.

e. Timelines which clearly designate when services are expected to begin as well as the anticipated end date.

i. VR Contractor shall follow the Contracts Tasking Protocol regarding priority time sensitive tasks.
f. Providers/suppliers, for each service, shall be selected by the individual and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian in collaboration with the VR Staff or VR Contractor.

i. For services subject to the VR fee schedule, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall only use approved service providers (identified in the Provider Management Program [PMP]) and only for services the provider is approved to provide, as applicable.

   a) VR Staff or VR Contractor shall not indicate a service provider as “to be determined (TBD)” in the IPE.

   b) VR Staff or VR Contractor may use “Various; Based on available, qualified providers” when the providers are unknown at the time the plan is written for the following services:

      1) interpreting services;

      2) transportation services

      3) transition services (e.g., Pre-Employment Transition Services [Pre-ETS], Summer Youth Work Experience/Career Exploration [SY], refer to “Transition Services” [80-VR-11-12]).

   c) With the exception of interpreting and transportation services, once a provider has been selected, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall amend the plan as directed in Section H.

      1) The completion of an amendment to indicate a specific service provider for SY and Pre-ETS shall not interrupt or delay the provision of services, as long as, the agreed upon service remains unchanged.

      1.1 When a specific provider for SY and Pre-ETS is unable to be documented on the IPE prior to the provision of services, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall document the individual’s and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian’s agreement in the case record.

      1.2 An amendment to the IPE designating a specific service provider for SWD and YWD shall be completed no later than the next annual review.

   g. The methods used to procure services.

   h. A comprehensive justification for the employment outcome, services, providers, and informed choice.

   i. Estimated costs for services to be provided and the parties responsible for payment.

      i. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall document the estimated cost for each service and who is financially responsible. This includes services:

         a) being purchased by OOD;

         b) provided by VR Staff or VR Contractors;
c) provided through comparable services and benefits; and/or

d) provided through the individual’s contribution.

ii. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall follow “Vocational Rehabilitation Purchases” (40-FIN-01-06) for the authorization and payment of all services.

j. A description of the criteria that shall be used to evaluate progress toward achievement of the employment outcome.

k. Responsibilities of each party involved with the implementation of the IPE.

i. VR Staff or VR Contractors shall check the appropriate boxes in the “Participant Responsibilities” sections of AWARE and document their responsibilities in addition to the roles/responsibilities of:

a) each service provider/supplier;

b) the individual and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian;

c) parties responsible for payment; and

d) any other entity that will assist the individual in achieving their employment outcome.

l. Assurance that the services are being offered in the most appropriate integrated settings.

m. Confirmation of informed choice of employment outcome, services, setting in which services shall be provided, the employment setting, the methods of providing such services, timelines, parties responsible for payment, and service providers/suppliers.

i. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall provide the “Selection of a Provider Information Sheet” (80-VR-07-01.A) and document how the individual was provided informed choice as required in “Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Informed Choice” (80-VR-07 and 80-VR-07-01).

ii. To document the confirmation, VR Staff or VR Contractor should check the informed choice boxes located on the IPE page in AWARE titled “Consumer Choice and Involvement.”

n. A statement of the individual’s rights, methods of appeal, and availability of the Client Assistance Program (CAP).

o. The need for Supported Employment services (refer to “Supported Employment” [80-VR-11-03]).

2. For SWD’s, the IPE shall be coordinated with the Individualized Education Program or 504 service as applicable. For additional direction, refer to “Transition Services” (80-VR-11-12).

E. Approval of the IPE

1. If an individual is working directly with VR Staff to develop the IPE, the steps below shall be completed to obtain approval.
a. VR Staff shall review the draft with the individual and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian.

b. Upon completion of the review, VR Staff shall obtain the individual’s and, if applicable, their parent’s or legal guardian’s signature(s) (including the date) on the draft IPE to indicate their approval.

i. If VR Staff needs to send the IPE (via AwareSign, secure email, US mail, or fax) to the individual and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, for signature(s) (including dates); VR Staff shall send an unsigned copy.

c. After the individual and if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, sign and date the IPE; a Qualified Rehabilitation Professional (QRP) shall then sign and date the IPE indicating OOD’s approval of the plan.

i. The QRP shall be the final person to sign and date the IPE.

d. After the appropriate signatures/dates and approvals have been obtained, the QRP shall enter the signature (i.e., start) date into the AWARE Plan page and save the entire signed IPE in an AWARE Case Note using the category “IPE-Signed.”

i. VR Staff using Aware Sign are exempt from saving the entire signed IPE in an AWARE Case Note.

2. If the individual is working with a VR Contractor to develop their IPE, the following steps shall be completed.

a. The VR Contractor shall:

i. draft IPE in AWARE,

ii. create an activity due, titled “IPE Draft Review”,

iii. assign the activity due to the Contracts Liaison Task List.

a) VR Contractor shall not sign or date the draft IPE at this time.

b. The OOD Liaison Counselor (i.e., QRP) shall review the submitted draft IPE.

i. If approved, the OOD Liaison Counselor shall save an unsigned copy as a PDF in an AWARE Case Note with the category of “IPE Worksheet” and summary titled “Liaison Reviewed Draft IPE.”

ii. If not approved, the OOD Liaison Counselor shall identify the items to be corrected within the task comments section.

a) The VR Contractor shall correct the identified items and re-task the draft IPE to Contracts Liaison Task List.

b) The OOD Liaison Counselor shall follow the steps outlined in Section E.2.b. to approve the draft IPE.
c. Once the initial approval of the draft IPE is obtained from the OOD Liaison Counselor, the VR Contractor shall complete the items below.

   i. Review the draft IPE with the individual and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian.

   ii. Send the draft IPE to obtain the individual’s and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian’s signature, (including the date) on the draft IPE.

      a) If the IPE needs to be sent (via secure email, fax or US mail) to the individual and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian for signature(s) (including dates); the copy shall be unsigned.

      b) If the IPE is sent using AwareSign, it shall not be signed or dated before the individual and, if applicable their parent or legal guardian.

   iii. Attach the signed and dated draft IPE to an AWARE Case Note with the category “IPE Worksheet” and summary titled, “Final signed IPE,” if sent via secure email, fax or US mail.

      a) When using AwareSign the Case Note is not required.

   iv. Create an activity due with the title “IPE Approval” and assign it to the Contract Liaison Task List.

   d. Next, the OOD Liaison Counselor shall complete the steps indicated below.

   i. Sign and date the IPE.

      a) When applicable prior to signing, review and compare the originally submitted IPE with the IPE draft signed by the VR Contractor, individual, and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian.

         1) The OOD Liaison Counselor shall be the last person to approve the IPE by affixing their signature and date.

      b) Attach the signed copy to an AWARE Case Note with the category of “IPE-Signed”, and summary titled “Liaison Final Signature”.

         1) When using AwareSign the Case Note is not required.

      c) Enter the signature/start date into the AWARE Plan page.

   ii. If not approved, the OOD Liaison Counselor shall identify the items to be corrected within the task comments section and follow the steps outlined in Section E.2.b.ii.

3. The IPE shall be considered valid when all required individuals have signed and dated the IPE.

   a. The date the QRP signs the IPE shall match the plan start date entered into AWARE.

   b. Copies of the IPE shall be provided to the individual and/or, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian after all required signatures and dates are present.
F. Implementation of the IPE

1. Once all approvals, required signatures, and dates are obtained on the approved IPE, implementation may begin.

   a. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall only authorize services listed on the IPE per “Vocational Rehabilitation Purchases”(40-FIN-01-06), with the exception of assessment services as referred to in “Assessment Services” (80-VR-11-01) and the needed ancillary services to support the assessment services.

G. IPE Evaluation

1. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall evaluate the individual’s IPE progress periodically to ensure satisfactory progress toward their employment outcome.

   a. If areas of concern are identified during the evaluation, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall contact the individual to discuss further and then document the discussion in an AWARE Case Note.

2. In the instance that the individual is not making satisfactory progress toward their employment outcome (e.g., disability-related issues) after counseling, problem solving and/or other appropriate supports are provided, VR Staff or VR Contractor should consider whether closure of their case is warranted as outlined in “Case Closure” (80-VR-02-01).

3. If an individual is unable to participate in services listed in the IPE for a period of up to 90 calendar days, VR Staff or VR Contractor should place the individual in an interrupted status (“Service-I”) if the following criteria are met:

   a. interruption is due to specific unforeseen circumstances;

   b. the individual has a plan to resolve the reason for the interruption;

   c. the individual has a timeframe for resuming VR services, not to exceed 90 calendar days;

   d. the individual intends to resume VR services following the interruption.

4. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall document how the criterion has been met in the “Service Interrupted” layout in AWARE.

5. During the time a case is in Service-I, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall, at a minimum, contact the individual monthly, to discuss the continued need for the interruption.

6. If the case remains in Service-I, beyond 90 calendar days, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall document the reason in the “Service Interrupted” layout in AWARE.

7. If the individual is unable to participate in the services listed in the IPE for a period exceeding 90 calendar days, VR Staff or VR Contractor should consider closing the case (refer to guidance and direction in “Case Closure” [80-VR-02 and 80-VR-02-01]).

8. In cases where another procedure addresses evaluation of IPE progress (e.g., Postsecondary Training [80-VR-11-05], Transition Services [80-VR-11-12]), the direction provided in the applicable procedure should take precedence.
H. Amending (Cloning) the IPE

1. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall work with the individual and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, to jointly amend (i.e., clone) the IPE when there are substantive changes to any of the following items listed below:

   a. the employment outcome when the first (2) digits of the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) which was listed on the initial IPE;

   b. vocational rehabilitation services as defined in OAC 3304-2-59;

   c. service providers/suppliers;

   d. financial responsibility of OOD and/or the individual and if applicable, their parent or legal guardian.

   e. the need for supported employment services as required in “Supported Employment Services” (80-VR-11-03; and

   f. expected plan end date.

      i. If the employment outcome is not achieved prior to the expected plan end date, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall amend the plan to extend the expected plan end date and, as appropriate, individual service dates.

         a) Modifying the expected plan end date in AWARE does not circumvent the requirement to amend the plan.

         b) The amendment shall be considered valid when all required individuals have signed and dated it, which must occur before plan expiration.

2. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall complete an IPE amendment when closing a case when there are substantive changes as described above and as required in “Case Closure” (80-VR-02-02).

   a. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall not remove services that were previously provided.

   b. VR Staff or VR Contractor should always select the “Clone Previous Plan” option in AWARE to make additions and/or corrections and to keep previously-provided services intact.

3. VR Staff or VR Contractor should follow Section E. to approve an IPE amendment prior to any changes being implemented.

   a. Justification for all IPE amendments shall be documented, along with informed choice, in an AWARE Case Note and titled “Clone Plan Justification” in the “Summary” field and Informed Choice as the category.

   b. VR Staff or VR Contractor may determine an emergency (e.g., immediate job-related need) necessitates an exception to the approval process for an IPE amendment.

      i. In such a situation, the amendment shall be agreed upon verbally with the individual and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, documented in AWARE, and signed as soon as reasonably possible.
I. Annual Review of the IPE

1. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall review the IPE annually with the individual and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, in order to determine the individual’s progress toward achieving the identified employment outcome.

   a. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall complete the annual review within 30 days before or after the anniversary date of the implementation of the original IPE, preferably in a face-to-face meeting with the individual and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian.

      i. Amendments to the IPE and the date of the last annual review do not alter the timeframes for completion of the annual review.

2. During the annual review VR Staff or VR Contractor shall complete a written narrative in AWARE on the “Plan Review Layout” page that includes the items below.

   a. A brief summary of the services completed and progress made towards the employment outcome during the past year.

      i. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall amend the IPE during the annual review if there are substantive changes as listed above in H.1.a. - g.

   b. The individual’s and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian’s opinion(s) and the VR Staff or VR Contractor’s observations regarding whether progress is sufficient and/or if there needs to be any changes.

   c. Next steps and incremental goals for the remainder of services and/or the upcoming year.

3. Once the Annual Review has been completed, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall send the “Annual Review Letter for IPE” (80-VR-08-01.B) to the individual.

J. Violation

An employee who violates this procedure may be subject to discipline up to and including removal.

FORMS AND ATTACHMENTS

• 80-VR-08-01.A Time Extension for IPE Development
• 80-VR-08-01.B Annual Review Letter for IPE

RESOURCES

• 80-VR-99.A Vocational Rehabilitation Definitions
• 80-VR-98 Standard Expectations and Funding Information for Vocational Rehabilitation Policies and Procedures
• 80-VR-11-12 Transition Services
• 80-VR-01.B Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program Overview
• 80-VR-01-01.F Points of Consideration for Fast Track
• 80-VR-02-01 Vocational Rehabilitation Case Closure
• 80-VR-04-01 Comprehensive Assessment Procedure
• 80-VR-11-05 Postsecondary Training
• 80-VR-11 Vocational Rehabilitation Services - and subsequent procedures
• 80-VR-16-01 Self-Employment
• 80-VR-11-03 Supported Employment Services
• 40-FIN-01-06 Vocational Rehabilitation Purchases
• 80-VR-07-01.A Selection of a Provider Informational Sheet
• 80-VR-07 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Informed Choice
• 80-VR-07-01 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Informed Choice
• 80-VR-11-01 Vocational Rehabilitation Assessment Services

FUNDING

Refer to “Standard Expectations and Funding Information for Vocational Rehabilitation Policies and Procedures” (80-VR-98) for Information on OOD’s federal grant funding amounts and percentages awarded by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the Deputy Director, or designee, to review this policy, on or before, the date listed in the header and if applicable, make any necessary revisions. The Deputy Director, or designee, shall document the review as required in “Policy and Procedure Process” (10-ADM-01).