



Arizona's Protection & Advocacy System

Frequently Asked Questions: The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

Your Vocational Rehabilitation Rights

1. What is an IPE?

The IPE is an important document in the vocational rehabilitation process with the Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration (AzRSA). The IPE contains specific information on your employment outcome and what services and supports AzRSA agrees to provide to help you reach your goal.

Your IPE is like a contract between you and AzRSA. Under federal and state law, AzRSA is only required to provide the services listed in your IPE (or IPE amendments) that you need to reach your employment goal (i.e. obtain a job, keep a job, or advance your employment). If you need to change your goal, take additional steps to reach your goal or need more services that are not in your IPE, you must request that your IPE be amended.

2. Who writes the IPE?

You write your own IPE with or without the help of your VR Counselor. Even if you want your VR Counselor's help, you must actively participate in writing your IPE. Your VR Counselor (and supervisors) must approve your IPE before services may begin. If you do not have a work or career goal in mind or do not know the steps it will take to reach the goal, you may ask your VR Counselor for vocational rehabilitation counseling and assistance to identify an employment outcome.

3. What is in an IPE?

Under Federal law, an IPE must include:

- a. The specific employment outcome, chosen by you (i.e. a description of your work goal), consistent with your unique strengths, concerns, abilities and interests.
- b. The specific VR services to be provided to help you reach your employment outcome.
- c. The timeline for VR services to be provided and for achieving the employment outcome.
- d. The agency responsible to provide the VR services and the method to obtain those services.
- e. The criteria for evaluating progress toward achieving the employment outcome.
- f. The terms and conditions of the IPE including:
 - 1) AzRSA's responsibilities
 - 2) your responsibilities regarding costs, if any, obtaining comparable benefits and communicating with your VR Counselor
 - 3) any other agencies responsibilities providing comparable benefits (e.g. AHCCCS)
- g. The extended services to be provided individuals with the most significant disabilities who are expected to need ongoing supported employment.
- h. The transition services to be provided for students with disabilities and youth with disabilities.

i. The projected need for post-employment services.

See 29 U.S.C. § 722(b)(3).

4. What services may be provided in an IPE?

AzRSA will only provide VR services necessary to reach your employment outcome. It is important to fully develop your IPE and identify all the services you need to meet your employment outcome. Remember, all VR services that AzRSA provides must be listed in the IPE. AzRSA will not reimburse you for any services or incidentals that you paid for without prior written authorization. Always speak to your VR Counselor before purchasing anything.

5. How is the IPE developed?

The IPE should be created, implemented and evaluated in a cooperative relationship between you and your VR Counselor. Under Federal and Arizona law, the IPE must be developed within 90 days of the date of your eligibility determination. You have the right to “informed choice” during your IPE development. This means that, among other things, AzRSA must consider your choice in determining an employment goal, the services being provided and who provides them to help you achieve the goal.

The IPE must be reviewed at least annually and, if necessary, amended if there are substantive changes in the employment outcome, VR services to be provided or the service providers. Any changes will not take effect until agreed to by the individual and the VR Counselor. 29 U.S.C. § 722(b)(2)(E).

6. May I keep a copy of my IPE?

Yes. You must be provided a copy of the IPE and any amended IPE in your native language or format that is most accessible to you (e.g. Braille). If you have not been provided a copy, you should request a copy of the IPE and any amendments.

7. What if my VR Counselor disagrees with my employment outcome or the necessary services to help me reach my goal?

You and your VR Counselor may disagree on:

- your employment goal
- the type and amount of VR services necessary to help you reach your employment goal
- the service provider that will provide the service.

If so, you have the right to appeal any adverse decision by AzRSA affecting your IPE. For more information about your appeal rights, go to ACDL's Guide, Your Appeal Rights for Disputes about Vocational Rehabilitation Services.



7 SELF-ADVOCACY TIPS TO PREVENT IPE PROBLEMS

1. Your employment outcome should state your ultimate work goal. Don't settle for an intermediate goal even if AzRSA tells you the plan can be amended in the future.
2. Include all services and training you need in the IPE to reach your goal.
3. Maintain regular communication with your VR Counselor as outlined in your IPE. If your communication was by telephone or in person, follow up with a written email confirming the meeting or call. Continue to communicate with your VR Counselor even if they don't communicate with you. You are responsible for communicating and a failure to do so will likely result in AzRSA sending a notice that they intend to close your case.

4. If you need additional supports or services to continue making progress, request a meeting to amend the IPE. Don't wait to fail in your training or classes before you reach out for assistance. You are responsible for making progress towards your employment outcome. If you are failing or taking too long to reach your goal, AzRSA may send a notice that they intend to close your case because of lack of progress.
5. Report problems and delays caused by AzRSA in writing, especially when your progress is threatened. Do so as soon as possible. Use the following chain: VR Supervisor, VR Program Manager, RSA Ombudsman, and DES Ombudsman. If after a reasonable time you do not receive a response, take it to the next step in the chain. If the problem or delay is resulting in the denial of service, consider filing an appeal for denial of services.
6. Whenever you are presented with an amended IPE, check it carefully to make sure that you agree with the change(s) before signing it.
7. Keep a copy of your IPE and each amended IPE for your records. If you receive a letter changing or terminating any services, follow the steps in the denial letter to appeal the decision if you disagree.



Troubleshooting Problems In The IPE Process

Problem

My VR Counselor told me to put down “customer service” as my employment outcome and I want to be a hotel manager.

Self-advocacy steps

You should not agree to an employment outcome unless it is your actual work goal. You—not your VR Counselor—must determine your employment outcome.

Problem

Self-advocacy steps

	<p>Ask to reschedule the IPE meeting and bring a support person or advocate to help you present labor market information about your chosen goal. If AzRSA refuses to include your employment goal, ask for their reason(s).</p> <p>If you do not have an employment goal in mind, ask for VR counseling or testing to help you identify vocational and career interest areas.</p> <p>If you are denied your employment goal or vocational counseling to find a suitable goal, you may appeal these decisions.</p> <p>You may ask help to address the issue by calling: VR Supervisor → VR Program Manager → RSA Ombudsman → DES Ombudsman.</p> <p>You may appeal an unfavorable decision.</p>
<p>Based on my research I need a four-year degree to reach my goal and RSA will only list an AA degree on my IPE.</p>	<p>Whenever you believe you need more training than AzRSA is willing to offer, review the labor market information that you have collected with them to see if most jobs require a four-year degree. Ask your VR Counselor to explain why they believe less training will allow you to reach your goal.</p> <p>If you are dissatisfied with their response, you may ask for help in resolving the dispute with the VR Supervisor or Program Manager.</p> <p>If these steps are not helpful, you can ask for AzRSA to put the denial in writing and consider your appeal options.</p>
<p>VR authorized dorm expenses but I keep getting calls from the university that my dorm has still not been paid.</p>	<p>If AzRSA delays payment of authorized services on an approved IPE and it is jeopardizing your success or delaying your rehabilitation, take these steps.</p>

Problem

Self-advocacy steps

	<p>Let VR know in writing that an authorized IPE service is not being provided and how it is delaying your rehabilitation or jeopardizing your successful completion of services. Use email or a letter.</p> <p>If, after a short time to resolve the matter, the service is not paid ask for help from these sources:</p> <p>VR Supervisor→ VR Program Manager→ RSA Ombudsman→ DES Ombudsman.</p>
<p>My VR Counselor insists that I must attend school full-time, but I can only attend part-time because of my disability.</p>	<p>Be prepared to explain why your disability is preventing you from attending school full-time. If appropriate, provide a statement from a healthcare provider explaining why you need to attend school part-time.</p> <p>If you are dissatisfied with your VR Counselor's response, you may ask for help in resolving the dispute with the VR Supervisor or Program Manager.</p> <p>If these steps are not helpful, you can ask for AzRSA to put the denial in writing and consider your appeal options.</p>
<p>I need a laptop and internet service to earn an online degree but my VR Counselor denied the services. She told me to use the computers in the public library.</p>	<p>Be prepared to explain why you need a laptop and internet services to earn your online degree. For example, you may find that there are time limits on how long you may be on the public work stations, the public work stations hours are not the hours that are your best study hours, or due to fatigue you need to be able to pace yourself and rest frequently while studying. While AzRSA may impose cost-saving measures, they cannot refuse VR services necessary due to a person's disability to reach your goal.</p>

Problem

Self-advocacy steps

	<p>If you are dissatisfied with AzRSA's response, you may ask for help in resolving the dispute:</p> <p>VR Supervisor→ VR Program Manager→ RSA Ombudsman→ DES Ombudsman.</p> <p>If these steps are not helpful, you can ask for AzRSA to put the denial in writing and consider your appeal options.</p>
<p>I am a transition-age youth and VR will not provide any independent living services.</p>	<p>Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student or youth with a disability, designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from high school to post-school activities including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.” 34 CFR 361.5(b)(55).</p> <p>RSA has an obligation to provide or arrange for transition services, including independent living services.</p> <p>If you are dissatisfied with AzRSA's response, you may ask for help in resolving the dispute: VR Supervisor→ VR Program Manager→ RSA Ombudsman→ DES Ombudsman.</p> <p>If these steps are not helpful, you can ask for AzRSA to put the denial in writing and consider your appeal options.</p>