

LRS CHAPTER 4, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & GUIDANCE MANUAL

	Part	Name	Effective Date
	413	Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)	*5/25/2022**
Authorization Federal Register, Volume 81, Department of Education, 34 CFR 361, Part IV, State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program, §361.45, §361.46, §361.48, §361.52 §361.53, §361.54 and §361.55.			

The IPE reflects the culmination of everything that has transpired since the moment the consumer applied for vocational rehabilitation services. In essence, the IPE is the product of the Counselor’s professional assessment and analysis of all pertinent medical, psychological, educational, vocational, and other related information the Counselor has gathered. It reflects the consumer’s interests, aptitudes, assets, limitations, and unique background, as well as the Counselor’s professional expertise, experience, and guidance relative to employment-related needs of persons with disabilities. The IPE develops a “plan” that fosters self-growth, promotes independence, and results in competitive integrated employment for the consumer.

I. PROMPT DEVELOPMENT OF THE IPE:

The Rehabilitation Act requires that the IPE be developed as soon as possible, but not later than 90 days after the date of determination of eligibility, unless the State unit and the eligible individual agree to the extension of the 90-day deadline to a specific date by which the IPE must be completed. If the individual has been released from a delayed status waiting list for service, the 90-day time period begins on the date that they are placed in eligible status to be served.

- A. When, due to reasons beyond the agency’s control, the individual is unable to participate in the development of the IPE within the 90-day time frame required, the counselor must discuss with the individual the reason for delay. If the eligible individual and counselor agree, an extension can be granted for a specific agreed upon date.
- B. The counselor must make a case note entry in AWARE to document the individual’s consent to extend the 90-day timeline (a signed statement by the consumer is not required) and enter the specific extension date the eligible individual agreed to and input any other necessary information in AWARE to move the case to Eligible-E status. A case note indicating the reason for the extension given by the consumer and agreed upon by the counselor should also be entered.
- C. If the individual does not agree to an extension of time after the Counselor has given a full explanation of the option for extension, then the Counselor should take the following action:
 1. If the Counselor has sufficient information to develop an IPE to begin delivery of services, then the initial plan should be developed and can be amended in the future if needed.

2. If the Counselor does not have sufficient information to determine services that need to be provided, and the individual does not agree to an extension after further vocational guidance and counseling is provided, then the Counselor should initiate case closure by sending the closure letter, refer the individual to CAP and inform the individual of their due process rights (Refer to Chapter 4, Part 421, Due Process).

II. OPTIONS FOR DEVELOPING THE IPE

Many vocational rehabilitation consumers have expressed the need for greater choice and involvement in developing their IPE's. The Rehabilitation Act affords eligible individuals the ability to determine the extent to which the LRS Counselor shall assist in the development of the individual's IPE. The IPE's implementation, however, is conditioned on the approval and signature of the eligible individual, the LRS Rehabilitation Counselor, the District Supervisor (unless the Counselor has Independent Approval Status), and any additional Agency-required approvals, as well as available agency funding.

- A. After completion of the assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs and when the planning process begins, the Counselor shall provide the consumer a copy of the IPE Brochure which contains all pertinent information on the individual's options for developing the IPE. The individual's options include:
 1. Assistance from the LRS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in developing all or part of the IPE.
 2. The right of the individual or, as appropriate, their representative to develop all or part of their own IPE.
- B. If the consumer or, as appropriate, their representative chooses to develop their own IPE, the Counselor must take the following actions:
 1. Provide the consumer with a copy of, and an explanation of, Part 413 of the Technical Assistance and Guidance Manual.
 2. Provide the consumer with a copy of the IPE that includes identifying information. This is printed from the AWARE, Participant Module, select client, Pages Button, Plan, Plan Browse, Reports, IPE.
 3. Provide the consumer with a copy of, and an explanation of, Part 410 (Comparable Services and Similar Benefits) and Part 411, Financial Status, as applicable of the Technical Assistance and Guidance Manual.
 4. Provide the consumer with a copy of, and an explanation of, LRS' form RS-14.

5. As appropriate, provide the consumer with a copy of, and an explanation of, information in Part 412 (Services) of the Technical Assistance and Guidance Manual.
 6. As appropriate, provide the consumer with any other forms and/or additional information, including assessment data, occupational forecasting information, etc., that the consumer may need to develop an IPE.
 7. As appropriate, provide the consumer with a copy of and an explanation of pertinent section(s) of LRS' Vocational Rehabilitation Policy Manual.
- C. The Counselor shall also inform the consumer that the IPE shall, at a minimum:
1. Be a written document prepared on forms provided by LRS and follow all applicable laws, regulations, policies, procedures and guidelines.
 2. Be developed and implemented in a manner that affords eligible individuals the opportunity to exercise informed choice in selecting an employment outcome, the specific vocational rehabilitation services to be provided under the IPE, the entity that will provide the services; and the methods to procure the services consistent with Informed Choice as defined in Chapter 7, Part 101 of LRS' Vocational Rehabilitation Policy Manual.
- LRS shall provide information and support services to assist applicants and eligible individuals in exercising informed choice throughout the rehabilitation process, consistent with the following:
- a. To inform each applicant and eligible individual through appropriate modes of communication;
 - b. To assist applicants and eligible individuals in exercising informed choice in decisions related to the provision of assessment services;
 - c. To maintain flexible procurement guidelines and methods that facilitates the provision of services;
 - d. To provide or assist eligible individuals in acquiring information necessary to develop the components of the Individualized Employment Plan.
- D. The consumer also has the option of requesting to have the Counselor assist with, or fully develop, the consumer's IPE.

III. CONTENT OF AN INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT (IPE), CASE RECORD AND/OR AWARE CASE NOTES DOCUMENTATION

A. Employment Goal/Outcome

1. The employment goal/outcome must be consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, abilities, interests, capabilities and informed choice. It must enable the consumer to overcome the impediment to employment. The Counselor must provide the consumer with sufficient information about each employment outcome alternative so that the individual can make an informed choice. The counselor should also provide information about occupations in top demand within the state. Resources for this information can be located on the Louisiana Workforce Commission webpage at the following locations:

Employment Projections

http://www.laworks.net/Downloads/Downloads_LMI.asp

Labor Market Information

http://www.laworks.net/LaborMarketInfo/LMI_MainMenu.asp

Top Rated Jobs

<http://www.laworks.net/Stars/default.aspx>

2. The documentation leading to the selection of the consumer's employment goal must clearly demonstrate justification and address, at a minimum, the following:
 - a. What are the consumer's career interests, aptitudes, and abilities?
 - b. How did the consumer arrive at this employment goal?
 - c. What assistance did the Counselor provide in helping the consumer select this employment goal?
 - d. Why is it consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, abilities, priorities, interests and capabilities?
3. The counselor must enter a goal completion date in AWARE which is the date when all services ***are anticipated to**** end on the IPE. This will generate a "To Do" on the Activity Due list to assist in the case management process.
4. The career field will be selected on the AWARE Plan page under Employment Goal.

5. When choosing an employment goal for the IPE/Plan, * the consumer and counselor should select the goal that most closely reflects the consumer's agreed upon vocational goal.** The first three digits of the SOC code must match the profession chosen. For example, 25-1000 is the code Postsecondary Teachers. As long as the first three digits match (25-1) the employment goal, this will be sufficient for the goal on the IPE/Plan. At the time the case is moved to employment status you will need to list the actual employment title. If the first three SOC code digits do not match, you will need to complete a new IPE/Plan before closing the case successfully.

B. Criteria for Evaluating Progress Toward the Employment Goal:

1. The Counselor and the consumer must identify the objective criteria the Counselor will use to measure the consumer's success/progress in moving towards the identified employment outcome. In AWARE this is documented on the Plan page in Section 4 (Documentation) under A. *The counselor must review the consumer's progress each year at the annual review. The consumer must be progressing towards the vocational goal as agreed upon in the criteria established on the IPE in order for services to continue to be authorized at the annual review.**
2. Examples of objective criteria are as follows:
 - a. Consumer will achieve at least a 2.0 cumulative grade point average each semester.
 - b. Consumer will complete at least 12 hours each regular semester and at least 6 hours in any summer semester.
 - c. Consumer will attend at least 1 Alcoholics Anonymous meeting per week.
 - d. Consumer will submit job applications to at least 1 potential employer daily for the next 2 weeks.
 - e. Consumer will meet with the counselor on a monthly basis for guidance and counseling.
 - f. Consumer will meet with the counselor at the end of each semester.

C. Services

1. All services planned for the consumer must be on an IPE. This includes services that are provided, purchased, and/or arranged by LRS, as well as services provided, purchased, or arranged by a comparable service/similar benefit. *Services are authorized by grant year and cannot be authorized more than one year in advance, beginning with the start date of original IPE, and then, at subsequent annual reviews, services can be authorized or re-authorized for a maximum of one year if the consumer is still in need of the planned services and is progressing towards the achievement of the vocational goal as established in the criteria for evaluating progress on the IPE. Continued authorization of services is contingent upon funding and the consumer's continued progress and ability to meet the criteria established in the IPE.**
2. Information contained under services on the IPE should be clear and concise. However, the rationale and justification to support the services should be documented under AWARE Case Notes (i.e. the calculation process for determining transportation assistance is placed in AWARE Case Notes, not on the IPE).
3. Services provided to eligible consumers must have a discernable impact on the individual's employability.
4. All services must have both beginning and ending dates. *Timelines for services should be based on the consumer and counselor's estimation of time to complete the planned rehabilitation services, including 90 days of employment stability and achievement of the employment outcome. The duration of the plan should be as long as it is anticipated to take for the consumer to achieve their vocational goal and maintain stable employment for 90 days.** To the best of his/her ability, the Counselor (if not on Independent Approval Status) must anticipate:
 - the date that the District Supervisor will approve and enter the IPE approval into AWARE; and then use that date as the services start date for Guidance and Counseling to begin. All other services must have start dates that correspond to the actual date(s) the services are set to begin.
 - *end dates of services based on the estimated timeframe the counselor and consumer agree the service is anticipated to take to complete. For example, if the counselor and consumer agree on a vocational goal that will require the consumer to attend a four-year university, the counselor should estimate four years of college training and at least six months of job development, placement, and follow-up after college training has been completed. Services can be canceled if the consumer does not progress as agreed upon

in the IPE criteria for evaluating progress, and the consumer's plan should be amended at that time to reflect an amended vocational goal and plan of services. **

5. The District Supervisor must:
 - a. Review the IPE and, if approved, enter the signature start date into AWARE. The signature start date should be either the current date or the first service start date. Either date must be within 7 days prior to the current date. A future date cannot be entered into the signature start date field in AWARE.
 - b. If the plan is more than 7 calendar days past the start date when approved, this is considered a Late Plan. Follow the guidelines under Plan Approval Process in the AWARE Training Manual – Participant Module.
 - c. On the IPE under “Section 1. General Information,” hand write the start date that was entered in the AWARE system as the signature start date.
 - d. Sign and date the IPE. The date on the IPE must be the actual date of the District Supervisor’s signature.
 - e. Counselors on Independent Approval Status are not required to have the District Supervisor review, approve or sign the IPE hard copy or electronic version in AWARE.

6. ***

7. Guidance and Counseling
 - a. The most influential service provided by LRS is that of guidance and counseling. It is the common thread that provides the continuity to services and becomes the foundation for providing other services necessary to achieve successful employment by the consumer. It must be provided to every consumer. (Refer to Chapter 4, Part 408, Guidance & Counseling).

- b. Counselors must capture and succinctly document in the case record the critical elements of the guidance and counseling relationship to demonstrate the positive impact of vocational rehabilitation services.
- 8. The Counselor can address through AWARE narrative case notes any required documentation that is not on the IPE.
- 9. Service Providers and Methods to Obtain Services

The LRS Counselor must have an integral level of involvement in the coordination delivery of vocational rehabilitation services.

- a. The Counselor must present to the consumer a choice from among LRS' approved service providers.
- b. The Counselor must identify the entity(ies) responsible for purchasing and providing each service on the IPE form.
 - (1) "Purchased by" will usually be LRS and/or comparable services/similar benefits (i.e. private insurance, awards/scholarships, PELL).
 - (2) "Provided by" indicates the entity(ies) responsible for the service delivery (i.e. specified college university; physical/mental restoration provider; community rehabilitation program; consumer).
- c. Vocational rehabilitation services identified on an IPE can take a number of forms. Examples are as follows:
 - (1) Counseling and guidance directly provided by the Counselor
 - (2) Maintenance and transportation paid to the consumer
 - (3) Purchase of physical/mental restoration, assistive technology devices, and training
 - (4) The Counselor coordinates the delivery of restoration and training services provided by other agencies and individuals (i.e. comparable services and similar benefits).
 - (5) The Counselor coordinates the delivery of transportation services paid for with similar cash benefits.
 - (6) The Counselor provides direct job placement.

- d. When available, comparable services and similar benefits must be used before any other method of service delivery. (Refer to Part 410 Comparable Services and Similar Benefits.) The Counselor must apply all policies and procedures relative to Consumer Participation in the Cost of Services. (Refer to Part 411 Financial Status.)

D. Post Employment Assessment

The Counselor must conduct a post employment assessment to determine whether post employment services are anticipated at the time of IPE development. *** The need for Post Employment services are documented on the AWARE plan report. *Post-employment services are provided on an amended IPE prior to the consumer exiting the program.**

E. Consumer Statement

The Counselor must document how the consumer (or authorized representative) was informed about and involved in choosing among alternative employment outcomes, services, service providers, and service methods. This is documented on the AWARE Plan page. The consumer's written statement on the plan is optional.

F. Signature/Copies

1. The counselor cannot give the consumer a copy of an IPE that has been signed by the counselor until the counselor has also obtained all other agency-required approvals on the IPE. Therefore, the counselor must adhere to the following guidelines.
2. Prior to obtaining the signature of the consumer on the IPE, the counselor must:
 - a. Review the contents of the IPE with the consumer;
 - b. Explain to the consumer if there is a need for supervisory and any other agency approvals that must be obtained on the IPE before the IPE can be considered "approved."
3. If the consumer has not signed the IPE and corrections are identified on the IPE the counselor can:
 - a. Line through the error(s) and make handwritten correction(s); and
 - b. Both the counselor and the consumer must initial and date each individual correction made on the IPE;

- c. Explain to the consumer if there is a need for supervisory and any other agency approvals that must be obtained on the IPE before the IPE can be considered approved.
 - d. The consumer can then sign the IPE under “participant’s signature;”
 - e. IPE changes must be made in AWARE Plan Browse, before submission for final approval.
 - f. Do not reprint IPE, however, the changes in AWARE must match the “hand corrected” IPE.
4. If the consumer has signed the IPE and it is subsequently discovered that there is a typographical error on the service date(s), even if all agency required approvals have been obtained, the following correction can be requested:
 - a. The Counselor on Independent Approval Status, the District Supervisor or Regional Manager must request a review through LRS AWARE to correct the date typo mistake without having to do an amended IPE;
 - b. LRS AWARE will review the request and notify if approved or disapproved. If change is approved, LRS AWARE will make the change to the IPE in AWARE;
 - c. Upon approval, the Counselor makes a handwritten correction on the original case record copy of the IPE by drawing a line through the date error;
 - d. The Counselor will then circle the correction in red ink on the IPE and write “Date correction due to typo;”
 - e. Copy of corrected IPE must be provided to the consumer to notify him/her of the error, no cover letter is required;
 - f. AWARE Case Note entry must be made to summarize the activities resulting from the typographical date correction and subsequent correction.
5. If the consumer has signed the IPE and any corrections/substantial changes are identified on the IPE, the Counselor must complete a new IPE and obtain the consumer’s signature and, if not on Independent Approval Status, must obtain supervisory approval. This can be accomplished by either a personal appointment with the consumer or via mail.

Examples of corrections/substantial changes: Omission of a needed service; need for additional services; change in funding source from no cost to LRS to a cost to LRS.

6. After obtaining all agency-required approvals, the Counselor (or the Counselor's RCA) must provide the consumer with a final, approved copy of the IPE. An AWARE Case Note will be required to document that a copy of the approved Plan has been given/sent to the consumer.

IV. ANNUAL REVIEW

- A. The Counselor must conduct ***an annual**** meeting with the consumer for a formal annual review of the IPE. This annual review does not take the place of the progress review/assessment outlined as "objective criteria" on the IPE. ***The progress toward the vocational goal must be evaluated at least annually during this review, and this meeting must be documented in AWARE case notes and labeled as "Annual Review" in the case notes drop down box. All applicable required documentation as established in the criteria for evaluating progress on the IPE must be gathered and attached to the case record in the annual review case note at the time of the annual review. This includes the completed Motor Voter form (or evidence that the motor voter form was provided to the consumer), as well as an updated budget analysis (RS-14) if services on the IPE are based on financial need. Additionally, all required information and data needs to be documented in AWARE. For example, for training cases, all grade and/or progress reports must be received and documented in the case record, and all credentials and measurable skill gains (MSG's) achieved need to be recorded in the AWARE case record at this time.****
- B. If IPE amendments are needed, the Counselor will record in the AWARE Case Notes any actions taken and prepare appropriate revisions. ***If the plan is amended, the counselor and consumer will need to sign a copy of the amendment, and counselors without IAS status will need District Supervisor approval prior to the initiation of the new planned service(s). If the amendment necessitates new additional criteria for evaluating progress, the new criteria needs to be stated in the "Other Comments" section when adding the service. The Original Plan or subsequent plan being amended remains in place, and the consumer should be advised that all criteria and statements on the Original IPE or IPE being amended remain in place. If there are substantial changes to the services being provided (i.e. A consumer receiving Time Limited Job Coaching who is determined to need Supported Employment.) or the Criteria for Evaluating Progress (if the criteria established on the Original or Current IPE is no longer applicable), as well as any time there is a change to the consumer's vocational goal, a new IPE needs to be developed to ensure the consumer understands his or her responsibilities in the newly developed plan of services.****
- C. If IPE amendments are not needed, the Counselor will document this in AWARE Case Notes, as appropriate.

V. CHANGES TO AN IPE

- A. If there are any changes in the career field, the vocational rehabilitation services to be provided, or the service provider, the IPE must be amended to accurately reflect the change. If the employment outcome changes, but is still within the same career field (the first three digits of the SOC code remain the same), an amended IPE is not required. If the consumer who had a vocational goal of Postsecondary Teacher (SOC Code **25-1000**), changes their vocational goal to Vehicle Mechanic (**49-3000**), then a new IPE will be written to reflect the new goal, as the first three digits of the SOC code are completely different for those two occupations.
- B. Once the consumer becomes employed and a change in the employment outcome occurs that changes the career field, an amended IPE is required. The amended IPE can be completed by either an ***in person or virtual**** appointment with the consumer or via mail.
- C. Services are expired when the ending date on the IPE has passed. At this time, an amended IPE must be developed if services are to continue or resume. If an amended IPE is not developed within 30 days of the date the IPE expires, the case must be moved to Service-I status in AWARE and a case note entered to explain why services are interrupted. All amendments to the Plan are numbered sequentially in AWARE.

VI. HIGH COST IPE'S

If the total of all items/services on any IPE or Plan is equal to or greater than ***\$75,000****, the IPE or Plan shall be considered "high cost". In these instances, the Counselor must have both the IPE/Plan and the AWARE Draft Authorization approved by both the District Supervisor and the Regional Manager. In addition, refer to Chapter 4, Part 411.1 for further instructions on Secondary Approval requirements.