



Apprenticeships:

**Key Information, Sequence of Events, and
Strategies for Enhanced Collaboration**

**A Practical Toolkit for Service
Providers, Employers, and
Vocational Rehabilitation Customers**

Developed by the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance
Center for Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE)
Apprenticeship Learning Community

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List of Acronyms

- ADA Americans with Disabilities Act
- DOL Department of Labor
- EEOC Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- FAQs Frequently Asked Questions
- FLSA Fair Labor Standards Act
- IT Information Technology
- JAN Job Accommodation Network
- NTACT National Technical Assistance Center on Transition
- OA Office of Apprenticeships
- OJL On-the-Job Learning
- Pre-ETS Pre-Employment Transition Services
- RAPs Registered Apprenticeship Programs
- RAPIDS Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Data System
- SAA State Apprenticeship Agencies
- STAR Situation, Task, Action, Result
- STEM Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
- TBI Traumatic brain injury
- UIUC University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- VR Vocational Rehabilitation
- VRTAC-QE Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment
- WIOA Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act





Introduction

In January 2023, the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE) team at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) initiated an Apprenticeship Learning Community, which concluded in March 2024. This community included three UIUC facilitators and 11 stakeholders from diverse professional backgrounds and geographic locations. The learning community's primary objective was to enhance the access and success of apprenticeships for job-seekers and workers with disabilities.

The group convened approximately once a month online via Zoom for 14 one-hour sessions, and participated in additional small group work, to develop an apprenticeship toolkit designed for professionals, employers, and individuals with disabilities seeking apprenticeships. Content for the toolkit was primarily drawn from learning community members' personal knowledge and expertise. This comprehensive guide offers information, resources, and advice on various topics including:

- An overview of apprenticeships
- A detailed sequence or timeline for prospective apprentices
- Strategies to foster interagency collaboration
- Guidelines on disability disclosure during apprenticeships

This document represents the culmination of their collaborative efforts.





Section 1. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Apprenticeships

During our apprenticeship learning community, a critical issue emerged: people lack sufficient knowledge about apprenticeships. The fundamental aspects—what apprenticeships entail, how they function, and their benefits—were often unclear to both our learning community members and the colleagues, clients, and businesses they engage with. To address this challenge and equip stakeholders with comprehensive information about apprenticeships, Section 1 of this toolkit offers answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) on the topic. These questions will be presented from the perspectives of potential apprentices, employers, and service providers.

Registered Apprenticeships, Pre-Apprenticeships, and Youth Apprenticeships

Definitions

An **Apprentice** is a worker at least 16 years of age, except where a higher minimum age standard is otherwise fixed by law, who is employed to learn an apprenticeable occupation (defined below) under standards of apprenticeship fulfilling the requirements of [§ 29.5 of this chapter](#).

An **Apprenticeable Occupation** is one which is specified by industry and which must: **(a)** involve skills that are customarily learned in a practical way through a structured, systematic program of on-the-job supervised learning; **(b)** be clearly identified and commonly recognized throughout an industry; **(c)** involve the progressive attainment of manual, mechanical or technical skills and knowledge which, in accordance with the industry standard for the occupation, would require the completion of at least 2,000 hours of on-the-job learning to attain; and **(d)** require related instruction to supplement the on-the-job learning.

A **Registered Apprenticeship** is an industry-driven, high-quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience, receive progressive wage increases, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally-recognized



credential. Registered Apprenticeships are industry-vetted and approved and validated by the U.S. Department of Labor or a State Apprenticeship Agency ([Registered Apprenticeship Program | Apprenticeship.gov](#); U.S. Department of Labor).

A **Pre-Apprenticeship** is a program or set of strategies that is designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship Program ([Explore Pre-Apprenticeship | Apprenticeship.gov](#); U.S. Department of Labor).

Youth Apprenticeships and registered apprenticeship stakeholders—employers, educators, and workforce professionals—across the country are launching apprenticeship programs that serve youth, ages 16-24. These programs, often referred to as youth apprenticeship, combine technical classroom instruction with paid work experience ([Youth Apprenticeship | Apprenticeship.gov](#); U.S. Department of Labor).

There are many apprenticeable industries to explore ([Apprenticeship Industries | Apprenticeship.gov](#); U. S. Department of Labor) and include Advanced Manufacturing, Agriculture, Construction, Cybersecurity, Education, Energy, Financial Services, Healthcare, Hospitality, information Technology, Telecommunications, and Transportation. For free online training modules and information to learn more about apprenticeships, See “Registered Apprenticeships for Additional Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities” [Registered Apprenticeships for Individuals With Disabilities](#); Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Why Apprenticeships are Important in Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

About 90% of workers who complete a registered apprenticeship training program retain employment with an average annual salary of \$80,000 (U.S. Department of Labor). However, only about 1% of the 581,110 active apprentices in 2023 identify as having a disability (U. S. Department of Labor). Individuals with disabilities, including VR customers, who could benefit from becoming an apprentice to launch their career, are simply missing out. This important labor pool—job seekers with disabilities, should be well represented in apprenticeship training programs. It is therefore important for State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, who are experts in helping customers with disabilities to achieve their employment goals, to take the lead in establishing programming and collaborative relationships with partner agencies (federal, state, and local) to increase apprenticeship opportunities and outcomes for adults and youth with disabilities. Additionally, the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 contains a heavy emphasis on quality employment. By investing in registered apprenticeships,



VR agencies can assist clients in obtaining measurable skill gains, credentials, and quality competitive integrated employment outcomes.

Questions VR Customers or Individuals with Disabilities May Ask About Apprenticeships:

What kind of apprenticeships are there?

Many kinds! Regarding the scope of apprenticeship occupations and industries, the opportunities are expansive. There are currently over 950 occupations that are ‘apprenticeable.’ Major trades include healthcare, information technology (IT), advanced manufacturing, banking, insurance, and transportation, distribution, and logistics. As for the format, apprenticeships are primarily completed in-person, although some remote/virtual options are available. When searching for apprenticeship opportunities on the website [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov), there is an option to [search for “remote” apprenticeships](#).

As of February 6, 2024, there are 27 remote apprenticeships being offered nationwide, spanning from bases in Alaska to North Carolina. A few of these remote options include apprenticeships in “Low Voltage Technician,” “Graphic Designer/science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) Instructor,” and “Advanced Home Health Aide,” to name a few. As you can see, remote apprenticeship options still welcome a variety of industry choices.

How do I find apprenticeship opportunities?

One of the best places to find apprenticeship opportunities is via the website [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov). This website connects career-seekers with opportunities and allows them to search for apprenticeships by several criteria. Other ways to find apprenticeship opportunities include:

- [The Department of Labor’s Apprenticeship Finder](#)
- [The American Job Center](#)
- [Explore VR](#)
- [The Career OneStop Apprenticeship Office Finder](#)
- and checking in with your [State Office of Apprenticeship](#)



How do I become an apprentice?

In order to become an apprentice, your first step is to figure out what kind of career you would like, or find apprenticeship programs and review supported occupations. Then ask yourself if this might interest you. You may wish to utilize an apprenticeship job/program finder to do this, such as the one offered on [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov). Once you have located a potential apprenticeship opportunity that fits your interest, you should review the summary of the program along with the required qualifications.

These would include elements such as the start date, length, whether the program is in-person or remote, requirements, essential functions, tasks, related training courses, and where training will be held. If all of this sounds good, then the final step is to apply through the employer/entity who is offering the apprenticeship program.

What are the academic and experience requirements for an apprenticeship?

The good news is that apprenticeships are available to novices and beginners, catering primarily to individuals with little or no work experience. This includes those entering or re-entering the workforce, such as individuals who have sustained a disability or are exploring a new career path. While there are no universal prerequisites, possessing personable qualities and good people skills can go a long way. Previous work experience, although not required, can also be beneficial. In essence, apprenticeships do not have stringent academic and experience requirements.

Can I receive accommodations for an apprenticeship?

Yes! Individuals with disabilities can receive the necessary supports, including accommodations, in apprenticeships. This is possible as long as they are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), are qualified for the job in question, would benefit from accommodations, and the accommodations do not impose an undue hardship on the sponsor or learning institution.

What happens after I complete an apprenticeship?

Good things follow completing an apprenticeship program. Upon completing an apprenticeship, you stand to gain numerous benefits.

Credentials: Firstly, you will have earned an industry-recognized credential that attests to your proficiency in your occupation, which can significantly aid you when applying for other jobs within your industry.



Marketable Skills: Apprenticeships typically last an average of four years, during which you can expect to invest over 2000 hours. Following this, you will have developed into a highly skilled worker, enhancing your competence and marketability to prospective employers.

Networking: Lastly, you will likely have forged many personal connections along the way - friends, colleagues, teachers, bosses, coworkers, supervisors, and so on. Possessing a broad social network is often instrumental to achieving career success and personal fulfillment.

How am I going to pay for completing an apprenticeship training program?

The cost of an apprenticeship training program is typically covered by the apprenticeship sponsors, which can be employers, employer associations, or labor-management committees. In some cases, the government may also provide funding. In the U.S., the Department of Labor announces funding opportunities, some of which are focused on apprenticeship expansion activities

Questions Employers May Ask About Apprenticeships:

What are the unique challenges for workers with disabilities?

Workers with disabilities can encounter numerous unique challenges, both when entering the workforce and during their employment. Many of these challenges often stem from stigma, or negative attitudes, beliefs, or perceptions towards people with disabilities. Another challenge that individuals with disabilities may face in the workplace is related to their functional impairments. For example, a person with a traumatic brain injury (TBI) may struggle to work in environments with extreme temperatures due to their condition. The good news is that these and other challenges can be addressed through means such as disability-sensitive training, information dissemination, and the provision of reasonable accommodations for workers with disabilities.

How expensive are job accommodations?

Most accommodations, at least 50%, cost less than \$500. Remarkably, approximately 25% of accommodations do not incur any cost at all- they're free! In most instances, accommodations involve altering the way work is conducted rather than procuring an expensive item or piece of equipment. An example of such a low cost or cost-free accommodation could be permitting a grocery store cashier experiencing chronic pain to sit on a stool while performing their checkout duties, instead of standing.



What are common misperceptions about workers with disabilities?

There are many misconceptions and misperceptions about workers with disabilities. Here are the most common ones along with their corresponding truths:

Misconception	Truth
Workers with disabilities need extra time to do their jobs	Although certain tasks may take longer for individuals with disabilities, their overall productivity levels match those of individuals without disabilities (Kaletta et al., 2012)
Workers with disabilities have trouble getting their work done, and they frequently need help	Many studies show no significant difference between job performance compared to those without disabilities (e.g., Hernandez et al., 2008)
Only certain jobs are suited to people with disabilities	As with all people, specific jobs may be better suited to some than to others
Co-workers do not like working with people with disabilities	Co-workers with reservations may simply need more information about disability. In fact, most employers who have hired workers with disabilities report that the experience was overwhelmingly positive for everyone involved (e.g., Morgan & Alexander, 2005)
Disability inclusive workplace initiatives and universal design only benefit workers with disabilities	Hiring job seekers with disabilities is good for society AND good for business



Questions VR Counselors or Service Providers May Ask About Apprenticeships:

How does VR assist a customer with an apprenticeship?

What is VR's role?

VR's role in supporting a customer in an apprenticeship is very similar to how it would support any other vocational training program. First, VR can introduce clients to the concept of apprenticeship through counseling and guidance and exploring apprenticeship resources such as the apprenticeship finder on [apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov). Then, the counselor can provide information/referral and counseling/guidance to the prospective apprentice and explore together whether a given apprenticeship opportunity would be appropriate and compatible with their interests, abilities, capabilities, etc. If the counselor and customer agree, VR can provide support services that will allow the customer to successfully complete the conditions of the apprenticeship and after they obtain employment, including post-employment services. In addition, a counselor should add 'Registered Apprenticeship Training' as a VR service to the customer's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) when this service is provided to a customer to report the customer's participation in an apprenticeship training program; [See RSA-911 Data Elements 164-169](#).

What types of services can VR provide in support of an apprenticeship?

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) can provide many different services which include, but are not limited to, rehabilitation technology, maintenance (monetary support provided for living expenses such as food, shelter and clothing that are in excess of the normal expenses of the individual), transportation, books, supplies, etc. VR can pay for tutoring services to assist customers with the academic training aspects of the apprenticeship training program in order to facilitate measurable skill gains (e.g., training milestone, skills progression; <https://rsa.ed.gov/sites/default/files/subregulatory/pd-19-03.pdf>), credential attainment, and successful completion of the program and passage of exams. Job placement assistance services are also available to the apprentice. Relocation expenses can be provided to the customer once the customer secures employment. If a service can be directly connected to the completion of the customer's plan for employment, VR can potentially provide it.



How do we know a customer is ready for an apprenticeship?

A couple things to consider—

Motivation and Soft Skills: Completing an apprenticeship requires significant dedication and effort. A candidate needs to be sufficiently motivated to succeed in any apprenticeship endeavor. At the very least, a candidate’s attitude towards completing an apprenticeship should be enthusiastic. A passing interest will likely not be enough to get you through. A candidate should also possess basic soft skills. This includes appropriate posture and eye contact (unless limited by disability), the proper exchange of social pleasantries such as saying please and thank you, and being personable and agreeable.

Academic and Work Experience: While there are not usually specific qualifications that an apprenticeship-seeker needs to apply, many, but not all, apprenticeship programs do have an entrance exam. These exams are designed to assess candidates who apply for the apprenticeship. The test might include numerical verbal, and visual/spatial reasoning tests, as well as situational judgment tests. People with disabilities who need accommodations to take and pass the exam are entitled to them. The website [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov) provides language from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) on accommodations, including “appropriate adjustment of or modification to examinations.” It may be beneficial for interested candidates to look at some practice questions or take some practice aptitude tests to determine if the apprenticeship would be a good fit or if the exam seems passable. Here is an example, and there are many more online: [Practice Aptitude Tests](#).

How do high schools connect students with disabilities to an apprenticeship?

High schools, for example, special education teachers or transition coordinators, may be well connected and know about available pre-apprenticeships or registered apprenticeships that students can apply for in the local area, and who to contact if interested. For information and resources for how high schools may also initiate development of youth apprenticeships for their students—See [High School Apprenticeships: A Guide For Starting Successful Programs](#); U.S. Department of Labor, and [AASA Expanded Pathways Youth Apprenticeship Toolkit](#); The School Superintendents Association, 2020. It is also recommended to establish a partnership with the [State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency and WIOA Youth Program](#) and [U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship or State Apprenticeship Agency](#) to receive assistance and to learn more about available apprenticeship training programs. This [VR Explore National Resource](#) can also be used to help identify pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships for youth that are available in your area.



How do Pre-Employment Transition Services (pre-ETS) apply to apprenticeships?

Although high school students with disabilities can initiate their career path through pre-ETS, pre-ETS activities are not registered apprenticeships or pre-apprenticeships. These services include Job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on post-secondary education opportunities, workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and instruction in self-advocacy. Any one of these Pre-ETS can be provided to students with disabilities and be used to help students gain actual work experience through paid work experiences, internships, and job shadows. These services and work-based learning experiences can assist students in learning about themselves, including their interests and abilities or aptitudes, and the world of work. Pre-ETS may therefore be important in helping students to make a career decision about an occupational goal and in determining whether completing an apprenticeship training program is the best way to achieve that goal or if it is right for them.

How early in school should students be introduced to apprenticeships?

Pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs typically start during a student's junior year in High School. Students may start OJL (On-the-Job Learning) activities at age 16, which will count towards entry into a registered apprenticeship program ([Training and Employment Notice](#); U.S. Department of Labor). The specific types and conditions of permissible work activities are outlined for 16- and 17-year olds in the Fair Labor Standards Act and in State Child Labor laws ([Child Labor Provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\) for Nonagricultural Occupations](#); U.S. Department of Labor).





Section 2. Preparing a Vocational Rehabilitation Customer for an Apprenticeship



Another significant issue that arose during our learning community pertains to people’s uncertainty about the apprenticeship process. Questions such as, “How do I determine if apprenticeships are a suitable option for me?” and “What are the essential steps for preparing and securing an apprenticeship?” were frequently raised. In response, Section 2 of the toolkit offers a comprehensive guide to assist customers in preparing for an apprenticeship. This guide spans three critical steps: understanding oneself, evaluating available resources, and navigating the application process.

Step 1: Know Yourself – Is an Apprenticeship Right for Me?

Career Exploration

- Work together! Talk to your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor about your career goals and apprenticeship.
 - ◆ Not yet a Vocational Rehabilitation customer? Contact your [local office](#) to apply for services.
 - ◆ Talk to your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor about taking vocational assessments, such as [O*Net Interest profiler](#) to help you identify careers that fit your interests and personality.
- Explore occupations.

- ◆ Check out [CareerOneStop's](#) career exploration website to learn about careers, take career assessments, find jobs, resumes, interview preparation, training programs, scholarships, and more!
- ◆ Take brief self-assessment to learn if an apprenticeship is right for you (See Addendum for self-assessment tool “Is Apprenticeship Right for Me?” on page 31).

Research Apprenticeships

- Search the occupation on [Apprenticeship.gov](#). Do you see a lot of results? If not, there may not be any apprenticeships in your area.
- Find your state’s [Registered Apprenticeship Program](#)
 - ◆ Visit the Registered Apprenticeship Program’s website.
 - ◆ Search for apprenticeship employers.
 - ◆ Contact your state’s Apprenticeship Training Representative.
 - Ask them for the Work Process Schedule (also known as Schedule of Work) (See Addendum for an example on page 29) for a particular apprenticeship program.
 - Each apprenticeship is broken down into work processes or skill areas that outline the required work hours, tasks, skills (or competencies) and related instruction.
 - What are the requirements/qualifications?
 - Identify the physical/academic/cognitive/social demands.
 - Explore whether there are any Pre-Apprenticeship Programs for this occupation.

Do you Need More Information About the Career Before You Decide? Explore Work-Based Learning Experiences with Your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor:

- Informational Interviews (be sure to come prepared with questions!)
- Job shadows
- Company tours
- Paid work experiences
- Pre-Apprenticeships
 - ◆ Contact your state’s [Registered Apprenticeship Agency](#) to learn if pre-apprenticeships are offered in your area.



Step 2: Consider Your Resources, Strengths, and Needs for Employment

If you have barriers that may make it difficult for you to get or keep a job, talk to your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor about them. Your Counselor can help you find resources to assist you. Work with your Counselor to figure out if an apprenticeship is feasible and realistic for you right now.

Commitment

Are you willing to commit to at least 1 year of full-time work AND the required classes? Classes could be offered at night, during weekends, or online.

Level of Support Needed

- How much support do you need on the job and in required classes?
- Is the job realistic/safe?
- Will the job make your health condition(s) worse?

Transportation

- Do you have reliable transportation?
- What days/times can you realistically travel for work?
- Do you have your own vehicle?
- Do you rely on others for transportation?
 - ◆ Look up public transportation options.
 - ◆ Talk to family members about transportation to work.
- How far can you travel for work?
 - ◆ Map out your job search radius.
- What kinds of businesses are in your area?
- Are you willing or able to relocate to get the job you want?

Criminal Background

- Do you have a criminal background?
- If yes, work with your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to plan how to discuss your background with potential employers.
- Is the type of job you want attainable with your background?



Drug Testing

- Some jobs are hazardous, and accidents can happen, which may result in injuries and damage to expensive property. Workers must be alert and conscious of safety. For this reason, many employers require drug testing as part of the application process.
- Will you pass a drug test?
- If you have a substance problem, talk to your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, or the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services national helpline](#)

Limited Experience

- Remember, even if experience is not required, jobs are still competitive. Employers will select the best candidate.
- Do you have related work experience?
If not, look for jobs or volunteer positions that are relevant to your goals to gain work experience and to become a more competitive applicant for an apprenticeship.
 - ◆ For example, if your goal is to work in the medical field, consider customer service jobs. If your goal is to work in Construction Trades, or manufacturing, consider jobs in stocking, materials handling, production, and construction helper.
- Have you taken industry-related or relevant coursework before?
 - ◆ Safety training
 - ◆ College classes
 - ◆ Trade/Vocational school
 - ◆ Adult Education classes

Employment Gaps

- Consider getting a job to close the employment gap, if needed, to build your resume, to demonstrate recent work history, and/or to become a more competitive candidate for a Registered Apprenticeship.
- Be ready to explain employment gaps.
- What were you doing that could be considered unpaid work?
 - ◆ Caring for a family member/child
 - ◆ Volunteering and/or doing odd jobs
 - ◆ Taking classes/studying
 - ◆ Work training program



Resume

Do you have a quality resume that highlights your strengths and experience?

Ask your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for assistance. Also, visit your local [Career OneStop center](#) for resume assistance, interview preparation assistance, and more!

Child/Family Care

Identify resources for childcare/after school care for when you start working.

Worried About Losing Your Disability Benefits?

- Request benefits counseling from your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.
- Determine if working full-time is right for you. How much do you need to earn to live? How will working affect your health insurance benefits?
- Explore Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Services to learn what work incentives are available to help individuals to maintain their disability benefits while working:
 - ◆ [Work Incentives Planning and Assistance](#)
 - ◆ [Benefits Counseling and the Path to Employment Fact Sheet](#)

Qualifications/Requirements – Do you need these for the job? Can you get them?

- Driver's license
- Personal vehicle
- High school diploma / equivalent
- Related work experience



Required Skills

- Every job requires workers to have certain skills, abilities, and attributes.
 - ◆ Find out what skills, abilities and attributes are needed for the apprenticeship you are looking for.
 - ◆ To learn more about skills and abilities employers are looking for in job candidates, visit the [CareerOneStop Skills & Abilities Video Page](#).
- What are the requirements/demands for the apprenticeship you are interested in? What kind of attributes is the employer looking for?
 - ◆ Examples of **physical demands**
 - Must be able to lift and carry 50 pounds frequently.
 - Must be able to tolerate long work hours with limited breaks.
 - ◆ Examples of **cognitive demands**
 - Must be able to memorize and recite scripts.
 - Must be able to pay attention and stay on task even with background noise and distractions.
 - ◆ Examples of **social requirements**
 - Must be able to work cooperatively and courteously with others.
 - Must be able to work with a team.
 - ◆ Examples of **communication demands**
 - Must be able to listen and follow instructions.
 - Must be bilingual in speaking and writing in English and Spanish.
 - ◆ Examples of **academic requirements**
 - Must be able to perform simple arithmetic and utilize geometrical formula.
 - Must be able to read at a college-level.
 - ◆ Examples of **other attributes** that employers are looking for
 - Must be responsible, honest, and trustworthy.
 - Must be positive and have a good attitude.

Support System

- Who is considered part of your social support system?
- What role do they play in supporting you with employment?



Step 3: Apply For Apprenticeships

- When you're ready to apply, get help from your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Job Developer, and/or Employment Specialist.
- Identify the Registered Apprenticeship contact for [your state's Apprenticeship program](#).
 - ◆ This person can provide specific information about Registered Apprenticeship Programs and Pre-Apprenticeships.
 - ◆ Learn what schools/training institutions provide apprenticeship-related technical instruction.
- Are you able to find the Work Process Schedule (also known as Schedule of Work) for the occupations?
- Apply for the Apprenticeship job position as you would apply for any other job.

It is important to know that apprenticeships can be structured in various ways depending on the goals of the program, the industry, and the specific skills being taught. A few examples include competency-based apprenticeships, time-based apprenticeships, and hybrid apprenticeships.

In competency-based apprenticeships, progress is based on how the apprentice's skills, knowledge, and experience have developed. The apprentice moves forward in the program as they demonstrate mastery of specific skills or competencies. This type of program is often used in industries where measurable skills can be clearly defined and assessed.

In time-based apprenticeships, progress is based on a set number of hours working within a company or learning skills in a classroom. This is a more traditional model and is often used in trades and professions where a certain amount of practical experience is required.

In hybrid apprenticeships, elements of both competency-based and time-based models are combined. The apprentice's progress is evaluated based on both the development of specific skills and the amount of time spent in the program.

In terms of milestones, these can vary greatly depending on the structure of the apprenticeship. For example, in a competency-based program, milestones might include the successful completion of a particular project or the demonstration of a specific skill. In a time-based program, milestones could be tied to the completion of a certain number of hours or the end of a particular phase of training.





Section 3. Collaboration with VR, Office of Apprenticeship, and Employers

Within the context of an apprenticeship program, numerous entities must collaborate effectively to ensure its success for customers. However, our learning community observed that this collaboration often falls short of its potential. In response, Section 3 of the toolkit is dedicated to addressing this issue. It accomplishes this by precisely defining the roles and responsibilities of various apprenticeship stakeholders. Additionally, this section offers valuable tips and suggestions to foster successful interagency collaboration.

Defining the Entities and Their Roles

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) serves individuals with disabilities and provide a variety of employment-related services, including apprenticeships. For example, VR provides services such as job placement, training, job retention, reasonable accommodations, counseling and guidance, information and referral, and a myriad of other types of assistance to job seekers. VR is a federal program and much of the policy and procedures are consistent nationally; however, each state has different provisions that may affect service delivery. The designated provider of VR services in each state works to ensure that individuals with disabilities who participate in the VR program achieve a competitive integrated employment outcome.

The apprenticeship system consists of two types of entities responsible for registering and overseeing Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs). These two entities include the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship (OA); and recognized State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAA). Both the Office of Apprenticeship and SAAs provide technical assistance and support to program sponsors, answer questions about the apprenticeship model, guide partners on each phase of developing a program, connect businesses to training providers, and advise partners on available funding sources to support apprenticeships. While both entities function pretty similarly, there are some key differences that may apply:



Office of Apprenticeship	State Apprenticeship Agencies
Registers and oversees programs in states without a recognized SAA through state field offices. In some circumstances, OA may register a program in a state with an SAA	Recognized by OA to act on behalf of the federal U.S. DOL to register and oversee programs in their recognized state
Staff members are U.S. Department of Labor federal employees	Staff members are state employees
Registers all programs through standard documentation	May utilize the standard federal paperwork and documentation, or may use documentation specific to that state
Utilizes the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Data System (RAPIDS) system for registration, oversight, and tracking of apprentice progress and apprenticeship compliance	May utilize the same RAPIDS system as OA, or may use a separate system unique to that state

Sponsors of apprenticeships could be employers, associations, unions, schools or training institutions; however, the end result of the experience must be gainful employment. The sponsors role includes owning the standards, coordinating related technical instruction, tracking progress, and ensuring apprenticeship standards are being followed by the employer of record. The apprentice is hired by an employer and employers may also be a registered apprenticeship sponsor.

Tips in Facilitating Communication and Collaboration

- Understanding and learning what each entity is about through meeting and interaction.
- Becoming an active member of an Apprenticeship Coalition or developing one if it doesn't exist.
- Distributing specific VR-related marketing materials to sponsors to show how the program can support apprenticeship activities.



Bringing Collaboration to the Next Level—Perfect Implementation

- Designate one specific person from your agency to be the point of contact for apprenticeship partners and stakeholders.
- Schedule regular meetings and check-ins with key apprenticeship partners.
- Visit agency and company staff meetings and share a PowerPoint presentation about your agency/business and what you have to offer as an apprenticeship partner.
- Determine a specific referral process and outline this process in a flow chart to share with other businesses/agencies.
- Develop a funding matrix website outlining the funding for apprenticeships in your state so businesses can easily apply for funding and other business services.

Additionally, VR can reach out to the state apprenticeship agency to begin collaborating. Some state apprenticeship agencies may even assist VR in developing a pre-apprenticeship program if the VR agency is interested.





Section 4. Lead with Ability and Strengths & When and How to Disclose a Disability

Disability disclosure during apprenticeships is a topic that frequently came up in our learning community. Revealing one's disability is both emotionally and practically sensitive. However, the process of when, where, why, and how to disclose a disability can be unclear. In response, this section offers a comprehensive guide for customers on how to disclose their disability to an employer.

Before delving into this section, it is essential to recognize that disability disclosure can vary based on whether an individual's disability is apparent or non-apparent. Let's consider an example: If an individual has an apparent disability, such as blindness, and uses a white cane, they may not need to formally request reasonable accommodations just to participate in a job interview. However, upon arriving for the interview, a job seeker's need to use a white cane will make it evident that the person has a disability. At this point, verbal disclosure is not immediately necessary because no specific accommodation is required. Nevertheless, voluntarily disclosing the disability can be beneficial. The interview committee may have questions, such as, "How will this person perform essential job functions?" By openly discussing the disability (in this case, blindness), the interview committee can focus on the applicant's skills, abilities, and knowledge, rather than fixating on limitations or barriers. This approach may promote a more productive interview process.

How to Disclose a Disability to an Employer

Emphasizing Disability Strengths in Disclosure

Disclosing your disability to your employer can be a daunting task. You may worry about how they will react, whether they will treat you differently, or how it will affect your career prospects. However, disclosure can also have many benefits, such as getting the accommodations you need, building trust and rapport, and creating a more inclusive work culture.

One way to make disclosure easier and more positive is to emphasize your strengths. Disability strengths are the unique abilities and skills that you have developed that make you a good candidate



for the job. ***Highlighting your strengths can help you—stand out from other candidates, perform your job better, and contribute to the organization's success.***

When you tell your employer about your disability, these are some ways to share your strengths:

- Be polite and friendly in your conversation with your employer. Avoid using legal jargon or threatening language. Try to communicate in person if possible, or by phone or email if not.
 - ◆ Action tip: Start with a positive statement, such as "I enjoy working here and I appreciate the opportunity to learn and grow."
- Focus on your abilities and skills, not your limitations. Explain how your disability has helped you develop valuable qualities, such as resilience, creativity, or problem-solving.
 - ◆ Action tip: Use the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to describe a situation where your disability was a strength to achieve a positive outcome.
- Give specific examples of how your disability strengths can benefit your work performance and the organization. For instance, if you have generalized anxiety disorder, you can say that your anxiety gives you energy, motivation, and attention to detail.
 - ◆ Action tip: Link your disability strengths to the job requirements and the organization's goals and values.
- Anticipate and address any potential concerns or questions that your employer may have. For example, if you have dyslexia, you can mention the strategies and tools that you use to overcome reading and writing challenges.
 - ◆ Action tip: Prepare a list of possible questions and practice your answers beforehand.
- Express your willingness to learn and adapt to the work environment. Show that you are open to feedback and suggestions from your employer and co-workers.
 - ◆ Action tip: Ask for constructive feedback and demonstrate how you can improve your skills and performance.



Role Playing

Counselors can use a simple chart like this to prompt responses from the individuals they are working with and can adapt these prompts as needed.

Prompt	Response
My disability is (describe in simple terms)	Example: Depression
My valuable skills and abilities at work are	Example: I enjoy routine, I am a problem solver, I a team player, I am a fast learner
My disability might impact me at work by	Example: Time management skills
Accommodations that have helped me be successful are	Example: Outlook reminders, Color Coded Schedules

Once the Counselor has worked through the prompts and recorded answers, the counselor and individual can then merge the content to create dialogue around the disclosure.

Example for the info provided above:

“I would like to mention that I have a diagnosis of Depression. After reviewing the job description I do not anticipate my Depression impacting my ability to do this job. I enjoy routine work, I am a problem solver, I enjoy working with a team, and I am a fast learner. There have been times that time management has been difficult for me but I have mastered that by using Outlook reminders and color coding my tasks for the day and this has been very helpful for me. I am open to hearing what tools you use to help people with time management and I am happy to discuss further if you’d like.”

Why—When—Where—and—How to Disclose Your Disability

Why to Disclose Your Disability.

- Disclosure increases access to support and accommodations
- Provides protection from disability discrimination
- Provides an explanation for things that may be different about you
- The employer can appreciate your honesty



When to Disclose Your Disability.

- During the application process
- During the Interview
- After the job is offered

Where to Disclose Your Disability.

- Early in your employment. This supports any reasonable accommodations requested and it also allows involvement of your VR counselor.
- In-person (preferred)
- Via phone call or virtual meeting (like Zoom)
- Through email (usually not preferred unless there exists a communication barrier)

How to Disclose Your Disability.

- Disclose your disability in a concise manner
- Avoid prolonged and complicated medical explanations
- Disclose it in a positive way
- Explain that it will not impede your job performance

Benefits and Risks of Not Disclosing Your Disability

Benefits.

- It allows the request for reasonable accommodations
- It supports the involvement of your VR counselor and support staff
- Peers and supervisors can appreciate your honesty and be willing to help when you need it

Risks of **NOT Disclosing.**

- No protection from discrimination
- No accommodations provided
- No explanation for altered performance
- Increased anxiety that the disability could be revealed in uncomfortable ways
- Potential to put others at risk for safety



Specific Steps to Take in Disclosure

Disclosing your disability to your employer is a personal and strategic decision. You need to consider—the pros and cons of disclosure, what, when, and how to disclose if you choose to, your rights and responsibilities, and the best way to communicate your needs and strengths.

Here are some specific steps to help you plan and execute your disclosure:

- **Step 1:** Weigh the pros and cons of disclosure. Consider the benefits and risks of disclosing (or not disclosing) your disability, such as gaining access to accommodations, building trust, or facing discrimination.
 - ◆ **Action tip:** Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of disclosure and compare them. Think about how disclosure will affect your short-term and long-term goals.
- **Step 2:** Research your rights and responsibilities. Learn about the laws and policies that protect you from disability discrimination and require your employer to provide reasonable accommodations.
 - ◆ **Action tip:** Visit the websites of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) [Home | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(eoc.gov\)](https://www.eeoc.gov) and the [JAN - Job Accommodation Network \(askjan.org\)](https://askjan.org) to find out more about your rights and responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- **Step 3:** Prepare your disclosure statement. Plan what you want to say, how much you want to share, and when and where you want to disclose. You can use a script or an outline to guide your conversation.
 - ◆ **Action tip:** Write down your disclosure statement and rehearse it with a friend or a mentor. Use clear and concise language and avoid unnecessary details.
- **Step 4:** Disclose your disability to your employer. Choose a suitable time and place to have a private and respectful discussion with your employer. Use your prepared statement and emphasize your individual and disability strengths.
 - ◆ **Action tip:** Schedule a meeting with your employer at a convenient time and location. Be confident and respectful in your tone and body language. Listen to your employer's response and acknowledge their perspective.
- **Step 5:** Ask for an accommodation. Explain what kind of support or adjustment you need to perform your job effectively. Provide evidence or documentation if required. Negotiate and agree on a reasonable accommodation plan with your employer.
 - ◆ **Action tip:** Research the possible accommodations that are suitable for your disability and apprenticeship job position. Provide examples or evidence of how they will help you work better. Be flexible and open to alternative solutions.





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Addendum

Work Process Schedule

HVAC Technician | 860.381-010

Topic	Approximate Hours
Refrigeration basics and orientation	500
Safety	160
Customer relations	160
Methods of handling equipment	500
Constant humidity	320
Heavy air conditioning	500
Soldering and welding	1000
Tube bending and fitting	500
Diagram and blueprint reading	320
Pipefitting	1000
Controls	180
Power tools	1000
Test instruments	1000
Testing equipment	160
Service and trouble shooting	1200
Total Hours	8000



*This example provided is for HVAC technician Apprenticeship. ****[US DOL Schedule of Work \(Also called Work Process Schedule\) Dropbox](#)**: An online repository created by the US DOL, which includes work process schedules (or Schedules of Work) for apprenticeable occupations. Note that the resources included in this repository are organized by occupation. We recommend searching the page for key words related to the occupation and industry you’re working with.

Related Theoretical Instruction

The following related training outline identifies subject matter which must be mastered by the apprentice to successfully complete the program:

HVAC Technician | 860.381-010

Math	Science	Graphics	Communications	Trade Theory
Basic Math	Physics I	Blueprint	Technical Writing	Rigging
Algebra	Reading	Principles of Basic Drafting	Principles of Refrigeration	Air Conditioning
Geometry	Hydraulics	Sketching	OSHA Safety	Basic Electricity
		AC Theory	Welding/Blazing	
		DC Theory	Soldering	
		DC Circuits		

Is Apprenticeship Right for Me?

Answer yes or no to the questions below and then score your answers to see if you might be a good match for an apprenticeship!

1. Are you looking to go straight to work, rather than focus on college?
2. Do you prefer hands on learning over traditional classroom settings?
3. Have you found apprenticeship positions that match your goal?
4. Does the career you want require a certification or credential?
5. Do you know exactly what career you want to pursue? Have you had a career in mind for several years, researched it thoroughly, and decided it is the best fit for you?
6. Do you have specific goals for what you want to achieve through an apprenticeship?
7. Are you looking for your next position to be a permanent or long-term job?
8. Are you committed to completing the full duration of the apprenticeship program? See Schedule of Work for the demands for the program you are interested in.
9. Are you committed to following safety protocols and guidelines in the workplace?
10. Are you prepared to dedicate time to both on-the-job training and classroom instruction?
11. Are you good at balancing a job and school?
12. Are you committed to investing the required time and work in this career?
13. Can you use your time wisely and get your work done on time?
14. Would you describe yourself as self-motivated – knowing what needs to get done and doing it without others telling you to do it?
15. Do you take direction well? Are you comfortable with someone checking your work to make sure it was done correctly and critiquing areas you can improve?

If you answered mostly “yes”

Congratulations! An apprenticeship may be the right fit for you. You have the skills and the drive to succeed in an apprenticeship – and the perfect one is out there waiting for you!

If you answered mainly “no”

An apprenticeship may not be the best fit for you at this time. The good news is that you may be ready for an apprenticeship in the future – and the perfect one will be out there waiting for you!

* Quiz: Is Apprenticeship Right for Me? [Information taken from Lenawee Now.](#)

