

ADULT AGENCY SERVICES

Entitlement vs. Eligibility

Once a student leaves high school, it is possible that he or she will require the services and support provided by an adult service agency. There are many such agencies and the types of individuals they serve and range of services they provide are varied. It is not possible to provide the details on all of these programs in this guide. However, here is some important information to clarify the difference between educational services and adult programs.

While still in high school, students are entitled to educational services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Being entitled to education services means that the school system must provide services to meet the student's educational needs.

Once a student graduates, entitlement to services ends. An adult who needs agency services must be determined eligible and authorized for those services.

Eligibility Requirements

It is important to understand that eligibility requirements vary depending upon the agency and services requested. For instance, an individual may want job placement services. Vocational Rehabilitation provides these services, but only if the person meets certain eligibility requirements. An individual wishing to receive residential or vocational services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities will not automatically receive these services, as s/he must meet their specific eligibility requirements and funding must be available. Similarly, services from other agencies such as the Division of Behavioral Health or Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired are available only to eligible persons.

Planning for Adult Services

Even if it is not certain whether a student will need additional services after completing high school, it is advised that these be considered as early as possible. Age 16 is not too early! It is important to know whether the student will be eligible in order to make plans. Every service system has a different set of requirements for eligibility, so if a person doesn't meet the criteria for one agency, application may need to be made elsewhere.

It is also important to know that services or funding for services may not be readily available and the person may have to wait for them. Inquiring about services and making connections early may make the difference in getting the services when the person needs them.

Following is a brief overview of a few key adult agencies in Nebraska. You will need to contact these agencies directly if you need more in-depth information or wish to apply for services.

COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

What is the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired?

The Commission is a state agency offering vocational rehabilitation and independent living services for those who are blind and visually impaired. The agency assists blind and visually impaired individuals in leading full and rewarding lives as they participate in the world competently and independently.

What does the Commission provide?

Services provided include:

- Training and instruction in independent living skills. This may include training related to independent travel, public transportation, community access, home management, apartment living, keyboarding and computer skills, adaptive technology, and Braille.
- Career counseling and assistance in securing or maintaining employment. Services may include career exploration, interest testing, and vocational planning.
- Assistance to allow for post-secondary education, such as assistance with tuition, books, and equipment.
- Assistance in securing occupational equipment, tools, and supplies.
- Advocacy services.
- Counseling individuals and family members regarding blindness.
- Transition services.
- Assistance in establishing a small business.
- Consultation services for agencies and organizations interacting with persons with visual impairments.

Who is eligible?

The Commission serves all ages. In order to be eligible, an individual must have a visual condition that may lead to blindness or have sight impairments which seriously limit the individual's ability to engage in the ordinary vocations and activities of life. Typically, this means persons who experience difficulties in pursuing day-to-day activities and obtaining employment due to visual impairment. Federal and State statutes also require that to receive benefits, the individual must be physically present in the state and must be either a citizen or have legal status within the country.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Information may be obtained by calling the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired at 1-877-809-2419 or by visiting their website at <http://www.ncbvi.ne.gov>.

DIVISION OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

What is the system for behavioral health services in Nebraska?

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Behavioral Health contracts with six Regional Behavioral Health Networks across the state to provide access to mental health and substance abuse services for eligible Nebraskans. The Regions contract with local community-based providers of prevention and treatment services to meet the needs of individuals (for both youth and adults) that promote services close to their home and support systems. Additional adult services are provided in the state-operated Regional Centers for those with serious and persistent mental illness in need of acute inpatient or secure residential services.

What services are provided for youth with mental health needs?

Services funded by the Regions include outpatient evaluation and treatment, intensive outpatient treatment, day treatment, home-based services, community support, specialized therapeutic consultation and respite care. In addition to the traditional community based services, the Regions also provide the Professional Partner Program, which serves children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances. In the Professional Partner Program, a service coordinator (also referred to as the Professional Partner), works with each youth and family to assist with:

- Comprehensive assessment based on the strengths and needs of the youth, family, and community;
- Development of a team selected by the family that includes professionals and non-professionals;
- Development of an Individual Family Supports Plan (IFSP) with strength-based strategies to address needs;
- Monitoring of the implementation of the plan;
- Purchasing of formal and informal services and supports; and
- Monitoring the outcomes of the services and supports and providing feedback to the team.

All Regions also facilitate a Transition Team, which is a multidisciplinary team approach to provide a review of youth who may be in need of adult behavioral health services. This team can provide assistance to a youth, family, case worker or providers who are attempting to create a plan of action for connecting to future services and supports while transitioning into adulthood. These services are voluntary and do not guarantee access to services, but rather seek to provide a more efficient and effective transition for the young adult.

Who is eligible?

Mental health services are designed for individuals and their families who have a serious and persistent mental illness that can create lifetime disabilities, and in some cases make the individuals dangerous to themselves or others. Services are also designed for people experiencing acute, serious mental illnesses, which in some cases may cause a life-threatening event. There are specific eligibility criteria that an individual, either youth or adult, must meet, depending upon the service that is being requested.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Information may be obtained by contacting the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Division of Behavioral Health at (402) 471-7792 or by visiting their website at http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/behavioral_health.htm.

DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

What is the Division of Developmental Disabilities?

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) is an agency within the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. DDD is responsible for the system of services in Nebraska for persons with developmental disabilities. While DDD does not directly deliver services, it provides the funding and oversight of community-based providers and independent contractors for the provision of these services.

What services are provided for persons with developmental disabilities?

Services funded through the Division of Developmental Disabilities include:

- Service Coordination – working with the individual and their family to develop plans for meeting the individual's needs.
- Specialized Day/Vocational Services – services designed to assist in becoming employed. Services may range from supporting the person in a job in the community, teaching job skills in a sheltered setting, community inclusion or retirement activities.
- Specialized Residential Services – services designed to assist the individual in living in the community. Services may be provided in the person's home or in supervised settings in the community.
- Respite – service to provide occasional relief to the family from the day-to-day care and supervision of the individual.
- Non-Specialized (Community Supports) Services –flexible services and supports available to individuals residing in their homes. Services include community living and day supports, respite, assistive technology, home and vehicle modifications, and Personal Emergency Response System.

Who is eligible?

Individuals are eligible for services if they meet criteria for an Intellectual Disability or a Developmental Disability. An Intellectual Disability is characterized by significantly sub-average intellectual functioning (defined as an IQ approximately 70 and below) and significant limitations in at least two areas of adaptive behavioral functioning. Areas of adaptive behavioral functioning that are reviewed during the eligibility determination process are: self-care; receptive and expressive language development and use; learning; mobility; self-direction; capacity for independent living; and economic self-sufficiency. The onset of an Intellectual Disability must occur prior to age 18.

A Developmental Disability is a severe, chronic disability that is attributable to a mental or physical impairment other than one caused solely by mental illness. Individuals must have significant limitations in at least three areas of adaptive behavioral functioning. Significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning is not a component of a Developmental Disability other than an Intellectual Disability. The onset of a Developmental Disability must occur prior to age 22 and be likely to continue indefinitely. Examples of Developmental Disabilities include: Autism Spectrum Disorders, Spina Bifida, Traumatic Brain Injury, or Cerebral Palsy.

How is eligibility for services determined?

Eligibility is determined by DDD staff. Additionally, the amount of funding for services that a person is eligible for is determined by an assessment process based upon the person's abilities and needs. Individuals who have been determined eligible, graduated from a Nebraska high school and reached age 21 are entitled to funding for Service Coordination, Specialized Day Services and/or Non-Specialized Services. Individuals may be placed on a waiting list for other services until funding for services is available.

Is there a cost for services?

All individuals receiving services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities are required to complete an assessment that determines their ability to pay for the cost of the services received. For youth under age 19, the parents' ability to pay must be assessed.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Information can be obtained by contacting the Division of Developmental Disabilities Central Office in Lincoln at (402) 471-8501. You may be referred to a DDD Service Coordination office in your area for a determination of eligibility. Additional information may be found on the DDD website at:

http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/Developmental_Disabilities/

To view videos describing DDD services, go to:

http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/Developmental_Disabilities/ddwaiver_videos.htm

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

What is Vocational Rehabilitation?

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is an employment program for people with disabilities. VR helps these individuals make career plans, learn job skills, and get and keep a job. The goal is to prepare people for jobs where they can make a living wage and have access to medical insurance.

What is the role of Vocational Rehabilitation in transition planning?

Vocational Rehabilitation works with students with disabilities to prepare for life after graduation. To help these students plan for their future, VR works with schools across Nebraska to provide services through the Transition and Adult Employment Programs. VR's role is primarily one of planning and helping to identify appropriate post-school goals and needed supports, as well as employment readiness skills. Involvement with VR will generally begin during the last two years of high school. VR staff may:

- Provide information to students and parents.
- Help guide students toward appropriate employment goals.
- Consult with educators on individual students.
- Collaborate with schools to provide a variety of transition and vocational services.

What is Vocational Rehabilitation's Employment Program?

Students may be served in VR's Employment Program either during high school or after exiting high school. VR staff will determine the student's eligibility for the program and work with the students, parents, and educators to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Note that the IPE is different from a plan with a similar-sounding name, the IEP (Individual Education Plan) that is developed by the school. However, the transition plan developed during high school through the IEP process should provide the foundation for the development of the IPE for Voc Rehab services.

Examples of services that may be provided under the Employment Program include: vocational evaluations, career counseling, college tours and planning for college, vocational and on-the-job training, training in job seeking and job retention skills, and job placement assistance.

Students who are eligible for the Employment Program typically enter this program during their junior or senior year and continue through 90 days of successful employment after they finish school. Depending on their individual needs, the student may be in the Employment Program for months or years, as would be the case with a student who is receiving postsecondary education.

Who is eligible?

Students with a disability who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan may be eligible to participate in Vocational Rehabilitation services while still in school. VR also serves adults and students who leave school before graduation. VR staff will need to determine eligibility for these programs. Students wishing to receive services who are blind or visually impaired may apply to the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Information can be obtained by contacting Vocational Rehabilitation in Lincoln at 1-402-471-3644 or calling toll free at 1-877-637-3422. You may obtain information regarding the Vocational Rehabilitation office in your area or on the web at: <http://www.vocrehab.state.ne.us/>.