

Available Services for Teens and Young Adults who are Blind or have Vision Impairment

You have many changes coming your way during the transition from school services to adult services. This guide will help you know who to contact and what to expect.

Agency Overviews and Contacts

Your high school, Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired – NCBVI (Vocational Rehabilitation), and DHHS – Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) work together to help you gain employment, increase independence, and access your community. With your parent’s permission, your school can invite NCBVI and DDD to your meetings to help develop your transition plan.

As a 14- to 21-year old student, you should be using resources from your school and NCBVI. After high school, NCBVI can continue to work with you. Once you are eligible for DD services and 21 years old, you may be offered funding for services. This guide explains the services you receive from your school. It then compares services available from NCBVI and DDD.

School

You are entitled to special educational services and accommodations as long as you have a disability and need for special education. This is available until you graduate, or until the end of the school year when you turn 21 years old.

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired – NCBVI (vocational rehabilitation)

NCBVI provides services to blind and visually impaired individuals, including those with any additional disabilities prepare for, find, and maintain employment through proper skills training and opportunities. NCBVI also helps businesses recruit, train, and retain employees with visual impairments. For students 14-21 years of age, NCBVI has pre-employment transition services. These services include job exploration, work-based learning experiences, post-secondary exploration, workplace readiness training, and self-advocacy instruction.



Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

4600 Valley Rd. Ste. 100; Lincoln, NE 68510

402-471-2891 (phone)

402-471-3009 (fax)

DHHS - Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)

DHHS – Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) provides funding and oversight for community-based services. These are available when you have a developmental disability (DD) and meet eligibility and level of care requirements. The focus is to help you obtain employment, live independently, and access your community.



Department of Health & Human Services

Division of Developmental Disabilities

301 Centennial Mall South; P.O. Box 98947; Lincoln, NE 68509-8947

(402) 471-8501 (phone)

(402) 471-8792 (fax)

dhhs.developmentaldisabilities@nebraska.gov

Do I Need a Guardian?

School: Your parent(s) or legal guardian must participate in developing your IEP until you are 21 years old, even if you have reached the 19 years of age (the age of majority).

NCBVI	DDD
If you are under 19 years old, a parent or guardian needs to sign your Pre-Employment Transition Services Consent and Release Form and NCBVI-VR forms if applicable.	You do not need a guardian to receive services.

You may consider less restrictive support, such as power of attorney (POA) for medical or financial decisions. If you, or your parent, have questions about the need for a guardian or POA, the following agencies may be able to help:

- [Arc of Nebraska](#) 402-475-4407
- [Disability Rights of Nebraska](#) 800-422-6691
- [League of Human Dignity](#) 402-441-7871
- [Office of Public Guardian](#) 402-471-2862
- [PTI \(Parent Training & Instruction\)](#) 800-284-8520

Tip: There are different words for your written plan depending on who provides your services. Teams of people who support and serve you develop each plan with you. Plans are written during meetings.

- **Individual Educational Program (IEP):** School plan for education goals and special services. Includes yearly education goals and goals for after your graduate. Goals may include where you want to work, what you will need to learn, and where you want to live. Your IEP includes special education, accommodations, and activities to help reach your goals.
- **Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE):** NCBVI's plan for employment. Includes services to help you achieve your goals.
- **Individual Supports Plan (ISP):** DDD plan for personal goals. May include community participation, daily living skills, employment, and leisure activities.

What Services Can I Get?

School: Your Special education services, activities, and accommodations are based on your yearly goals, and goals for after you leave high school. This includes where you want to work (employment), what you need to learn (college or training), and where you want to live. As your interests and skills change your IEP goals, special education services, and activities may change.

NCBVI	DDD
Services are available to students with a visual impairment aged 14 to 21.	Services are based on your written plan and available funding.
Pre-Employment Transition Services include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job exploration • Workplace readiness training • Work-based learning • Post-Secondary Exploration • Self-advocacy instruction • NCBVI can attend your IEP meetings 	Once determined eligible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You get a Developmental Disabilities Service Coordinator (SC) to help you access services. • Assistive technology, home and vehicle modifications, and personal emergency response systems (PERS) are available as needed.
When more individualized services and skills training are required, you may apply for VR services with NCBVI.	Once you are 21 years old and a high school graduate: day services are available to help you find employment, volunteer, or increase skills needed to work.

How do I Apply?

School: Being eligible for Special Education Services does not guarantee you will be eligible for services with either NCBVI or DDD.

NCBVI	DDD
You can apply by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calling (402) 471-2891 • Being referred by anyone 	You can apply online at: ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov or you can request a paper application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At any DHHS office in Nebraska • By calling (402) 471-3121 or toll free (877) 667-6266
Once referred, a VR Counselor will schedule a meeting to talk with you and your parent or guardian about available services or next steps.	If you need assistance to fill out an application, you may visit your local DHHS office.

When Can I Get Services?

School: You have an IEP and receive special education services as long as your disability greatly affects your learning in school. When you graduate or reach 21 years of age before the next school year, you no longer receive special education services.

Tip: A 21-year old graduate is offered DD funding under the fourth priority, per Nebraska Rev Statute 83-1216. This priority sets aside DDAD waiver slots for persons transitioning from the education system upon attaining 21 years of age to maintain skills and receive the day services necessary to pursue economic self-sufficiency.

NCBVI	DDD
Services are available to students with a visual impairment aged 14 to 21.	Eligibility can be determined at any age.
Pre-Employment Transition Services include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job exploration • Workplace readiness training • Post-Secondary Education • Work-based learning • Self-advocacy instruction 	By age 15-16, you should apply for developmental disabilities (DD) services.
NCBVI can attend your IEP meetings.	Once 21 and a high school graduate: Day services are available to help you find a job, volunteer, or increase skills needed to join the workforce.
If more individualized services and skills training are required, you may apply for VR services with NCBVI.	Once eligible for DD services, you may request a SC.

Tip: Anyone can request an application for DD eligibility determination.

The "[Ready, Set, Go!](#)" webpage explains services available through DDD.

When applying for services from DDD, DDD will request all Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) reports from your school. MDT reports are most helpful when they include information on Intellectual Assessment, Adaptive Assessment, Impressions and Autism Spectrum. A qualified professional must complete and sign the report. The DDD Eligibility page has information on the most helpful way to document assessment results in the MDT. You may want to refer your school to [Information for School Psychologist](#).

What are the Eligibility Criteria?

School: To receive special education you must have a disability, which greatly affects your learning, skills, and abilities. Your IEP team (teachers, parents, and other who work with you) review your goals and the progress you are making and decide if you continue to need special education.

NCBVI	DDD
You must have a visual impairment to receive Pre-Employment Transition Services.	You must meet the definition of developmental disability found in Neb. Rev. Stat. 83-1205. Mental illness cannot be the sole cause of your disability.
If more individualized services and skills training are required, you may apply for VR services with NCBVI.	Your disability must have started before you are 22 years old and be likely to continue for life.
For NCBVI-VR Services you must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a visual impairment of legal blindness, functional blindness, or a degenerative eye disorder that will lead to legal blindness; • Have a visual impairment that constitutes a substantial impediment to employment; • Be able to benefit in terms of an employment outcome; and • Require vocational rehabilitation services in order to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment. 	Your disability must result in a substantial limitation in these areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptual skills: language, literacy, money, time, numbers, self-direction. • Social skills: interpersonal skills, social responsibility, self-esteem, gullibility, wariness, social problem solving, ability to follow rules, avoid being victimized. • Practical skills: activities of daily living, personal care, occupational skills, healthcare, mobility, capacity for independent living.
NCBVI works with your school and parents to collect necessary information to be determined your eligibility for services. This may include special education or medical records.	DDD works with you and your parents to collect information. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This includes special education and medical records. • There must be documentation of your diagnosis.

How is Eligibility Determined?

School: Every three years, your teachers gather information about how your disability is affecting your learning in school. Your IEP team (your parents, teachers and others who work with you) decide if you continue to be eligible to receive special education.

NCBVI	DDD
For Pre-Employment Transition Services, a parent or guardian's signature confirming a visual impairment is sufficient.	DDD receives your application and reviews all records submitted.
For NCBVI-VR Services, a signed application and eligibility documentation are required.	An eligible person will be offered day services when 21 years old and a high school graduate.
NCBVI has 60 days to determine eligibility for VR services	DDD has 90 days to gather records and make a decision.
NCBVI will notify you of the decision.	DDD will notify you of the decision in writing.

Do I Have to Wait for Services?

School: If you have a disability and need for special education, you receive special education, services, and accommodations according to your IEP.

NCBVI	DDD
Pre-Employment Transition Services are available to students with a visual impairment, with a signed consent and release, immediately.	Once eligible, a SC is available.
There is no waiting list for more individualized VR Services and you can apply immediately.	An eligible person will be offered day services when 21 years old and a high school graduate.
	Residential services can be available at any age when a person meets a priority category.

What if I am Not Eligible?

School: If you have a disability, and are no longer eligible for special education, you can request to be considered for a 504 plan. A 504 plan is for students who have a disability and may only need some accommodations. These accommodations may be the same as you were receiving with your IEP.

NCBVI	DDD
Pre-Employment Transition Services are available to students with a visual impairment aged 14 to 21.	If you are determined not eligible for services, you can appeal the decision.
For more individualized VR services, if you are determined ineligible or no longer eligible, you can appeal the decision.	If you have new information supporting your diagnosis or limitations, you can reapply.
NCBVI must show clear and convincing evidence of their decision. Evidence includes vision records, trial work experiences, and such.	Not everyone who qualifies for an IEP will be eligible for DD services.
Eligibility for services does not guarantee there will be available funding.	

What if I Choose Not to Participate?

School: If you drop out of school, decide to get a GED, or your parents refuse special education, you can change your mind. Your parent can contact your school to request special education.

NCBVI	DDD
Services are voluntary and you may leave services at any time. It is recommended that students and families discuss this decision with the VR counselor.	You may reapply in the future.
You may reapply in the future.	When you reapply, DDD will look at eligibility. You are not guaranteed available funding.

Tip: It is expected that everyone between the ages of 18 and 64 years old at least explore VR services.

What Happens During High School?

School: When you are 16, your teachers help you learn about your skills, abilities, and interests, including where you want to work (employment), what you need to learn (training/college), and where you want to live.

Your IEP also has goals for after high school. To help you prepare for these goals, your IEP lists classes you will take in high school. Your IEP also includes transition activities like: job shadows, work experiences, career visits, job exploration, career fairs, and career readiness. Your goals for after high school may change as you learn more about your skills, abilities, and interests.

With your parent's permission, other agencies who may help you after you graduate can be invited to your IEP meeting to help plan for after school.

NCBVI	DDD
NCBVI works with your school to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services.	While you are in high school, services are limited because DD services cannot replace services available from the school system.
Pre-Employment Transition Services available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring job options. • Work-based learning experiences. • Discussing training certificates, trade school, or college. • Teaching skills you can use to get a job, such as social and independent living skills. • Assisting in the development of self-advocacy skills, learning to speak up for yourself and your needs. 	DD services available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your SC can attend school meetings to get to know your interests and goals. • Your SC can meet with you and your family to provide information. • Your SC can assist you with finding and applying for other services. • DD services, such as residential or respite services, are based on available funding.

What Happens When I Exit School?

School: When you receive a diploma or reach 21 years of age, your teacher gives you a written Summary of Performance (SOP). This is a summary of your skills and abilities. It includes the accommodations, technology, and strategies that help you reach your goals for employment, college/ training, and living.

NCBVI	DDD
Transition services start while you are in school and guide you during the change from school to work.	Day habilitation funding is available after you graduate from high school, are 21 years old, and are eligible for DD services.
Once you exit school, you can continue to work with NCBVI on employment goals, subject to available funding.	Your SC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets with you and your team to decide what type of day services you want • Helps you obtain services • Monitors the quality of services • Checks in with you at least monthly
NCBVI helps you prepare for employment. This may include filling out applications, making a resume, and learning how to interview for a job.	Day services include developing skills for a future job in the community, supported employment, volunteer work, and accessing your community.
	All services occur in your community. You can choose which services you want to use and how.

It is important that you keep in touch with your NCBVI-VR counselor. You should keep appointments and complete your tasks.

Any DD services you already have continue. Examples are respite or residential services.

How Are Goals Decided?

School: Your annual school goals are based on your present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) and how your disability affects your learning.

Your IEP also has goals for after you graduate from high school. These goals are: where you want to work, where you will learn, and where you will live. Goals are based on your interests, job exploration, career exploration activities, skills, and abilities.

It is important that you attend and talk at your IEP meeting. You and your IEP team decide your goals. It is important that you, your school, NCBVI, and DDD share information about your goals with each other.

NCBVI	DDD
When you are receiving Pre- Employment Transition Services, the main focus is job exploration and workplace readiness.	When you are between 21 years old and retirement age, the main focus of DD day services is employment.
You are important to planning your goals. You should attend your meetings. Your participation in meetings and activities help you reach your goal. You will also develop self-determination and self-advocacy skills.	Your goals are based on what is important to you. Your hopes and dreams are the focus. You and your team meet with your SC to develop goals. Assessment of your skills identifies what you may need to reach goals.

Tip: NCBVI services can help you make the most of all your skills. This is their goal for all individuals, including those with the most significant disabilities. NCBVI can help you find a job working along with co-workers who do not have disabilities. NCBVI can custom-make job opportunities, support you in your job, or provide other services to meet your needs, subject to availability of funding.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Section 511, prohibits sub-minimum wages for people 24 years old and younger. There is an exception if there is substantial evidence, over time, that the goal of competitive integrated employment is unattainable.

How Do I Plan My Services?

School: You and your IEP team (teachers, principal, parents, and others) decide what special education services, accommodations, assistive technology and activities will help you reach your goals. During the year, you work toward your goals and complete activities in your IEP.

Each year, you and your IEP team meet to talk about your progress toward your goals, your skills, your abilities, and what helps you learn. Each year, a new IEP is written. The special education services you receive are based on your IEP.

NCBVI	DDD
You and your team develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The process helps you decide on your employment goals. Your written plan outlines specific services needed to reach your goals and who will provide those services.	You and your team develop an Individual Supports Plan (ISP). Your written plan identifies the services you will receive and who will provide them.

NCBVI-VR Counselors work with you to identify what is making it hard for you to find employment. They help you make the right job goal based on your skills, interests and abilities.	Your team develops your plan. This team includes you, your family, your guardian (if you have one), any provider(s) of DD services, and any other people you invite. Your SC documents your plan in your ISP.
NCBVI staff work as a team, so your team may include several people supporting you work toward your employment goal.	Your assigned SC will lead your team and advocate for you.

For What Else Should I Apply?

Social Security

You should apply for Social Security. You may be qualified for Social Security (SSA), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). To find out more, visit your local Social Security office or www.ssa.gov/disabilityssi.

Medicaid

DDD requires that you apply for Medicaid benefits and accept if qualified. Medicaid provides a federal match to state funding, so DDD can fund services for more people. You should apply for Medicaid at age 18. You can apply through ACCESSNebraska: ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov

Financial Assistance

You may be eligible for financial assistance from DHHS - Children & Family Services (CFS) programs, such as:

- Assistance to Aged, Blind, or Disabled (AABD)
- Social Security Supplement
- Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Energy assistance
- You can apply through ACCESSNebraska: ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov

Other Resources

You may be eligible for:

- Local housing assistance
- Food banks or food nets
- Enable Savings Plan <https://www.enableavings.com/>
- Easter Seals Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) <https://www.easterseals.com/ne/our-programs/employment-training/wipa.html>
- Parent Training and Information Center (PTI Nebraska) <https://www.pti-nebraska.org/>

Information is available from Nebraska 2-1-1, by the United Way of the Midlands. To find the help you need, dial “211” on any telephone or go online to www.unitedwaymidlands.org/call211.

Tip: For consumers receiving services from NCBVI, NCBVI Counselors can assist in applying for additional resources.

Tip: Apply for all services for which you may be eligible.