

### Introduction

Assessments and evaluations are conducted throughout the VR process. Assessments and evaluations in Status 02 are used to determine eligibility for VR services. Once eligibility is determined, additional assessments and evaluations may be needed to determine an employment goal and services to achieve the goal. If needed, assessments and evaluations can also be provided after an IPE has been developed.

Assessments and evaluations should be conducted in the most integrated setting possible, consistent with the individual's needs and informed choice.

This chapter provides information regarding the different types of assessments and evaluations that can be provided during the VR process.

### Assessments and Evaluations to Determine Eligibility for VR Services

The assessment to determine eligibility for services is based primarily on a review of current existing information. Sources of such information can include

1. existing medical information provided by doctors, hospitals, clinics and referral sources, including the Confidential Health Assessment, eye examinations and other medical exams, and
2. VR counselor observations, education records, information provided by the individual or the individual's family, information used by the Social Security Administration, education officials and determinations made by officials of other agencies.

If additional medical information is needed to determine eligibility, the VR counselor should ask the medical provider to address specific issues that may affect the individual's functional ability to work or participate in VR services.

An individual who has a disability, as determined by the Social Security Administration is presumed eligible for VR services and would typically not need to have further assessments or evaluations completed to determine eligibility. An exception to presumed eligibility would be an individual who has had several prior unsuccessful outcomes with NYSCB.

For individuals who have had prior unsuccessful outcomes with NYSCB, the assessment should include an exploration of whether there have been changes in the applicant's circumstances that will contribute to a successful outcome.

### Additional Information

For additional information about assessments and obtaining medical information during applicant status see Chapter 2.00, The Vocational Rehabilitation Process, Status 02.

### Assessment and Evaluations to Determine VR Services Needed to Achieve an Employment Outcome

Existing information from other programs and service providers, education records, the Social Security Administration, the eligible individual and their family and information used to determine eligibility should be used to prepare the IPE. If that information is not sufficient to develop an IPE, an evaluation of the eligible individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice, including the need for supported employment is conducted to obtain information to develop an IPE. These assessments and evaluations take place after an individual has been determined eligible for VR services. The VR Needs Determination form is used to document the necessary assessments and evaluations.

Evaluations to determine an individual's functional capacities, adaptive living and communication skills (e.g., rehabilitation teaching), orientation and mobility skills, employment barriers, vocational interests, interpersonal skills, cognitive skills and work behavior can be provided.

### Assessments and Evaluations Provided After an IPE Has Been Developed

After an individual has been determined eligible, it may become necessary to provide additional assessments and evaluations. These assessments and evaluations may be provided at any time during the VR process.

### Comparable Benefits

Assessments and evaluations to determine eligibility and to develop an IPE are provided without consideration of available comparable benefits. However, Medicaid benefits and other benefits known to be available must be used in accordance with established policies and procedures. See Chapter 11.00, Comparable Services and Benefits, for additional information.

### Economic Need

Assessment and evaluations provided to determine eligibility and to develop an IPE are provided without consideration of the eligible individual's economic need status. See Chapter 5.00, Determination of Economic Need, for additional information.

### Obtaining Medical Information

Medical information such as an eye exam, specialist exam, audiological exam, otological exam, psychological evaluation may be obtained when needed to determine eligibility or to determine an appropriate vocational goal and the services needed to achieve that goal or when needed to address medical issues that arise during the provision of VR services.

A VR counselor may obtain a current eye exam when an individual has not had ongoing eye care and a new exam may contribute to preservation of residual vision.

### Requests for Medical Information

Requests for medical information should include specific questions about the individual's functioning such as diagnosis, prognosis, functional limitation(s), and recommendations related to treatment or employment. These questions should be addressed by the service provider in a report sent to the VR counselor.

### Selecting a Medical Provider

When NYSCB is paying for a medical service for an individual who is applying for or receiving services from NYSCB, the practitioner must be

1. appropriately licensed or approved by the State of New York,
2. willing and able to comply with NYSCB reporting requirements,
3. willing and able to deliver services in accordance with an individual's VR needs and their IPE, and
4. willing to accept fees for services as established by New York State as full payment for services.

VR counselors should not influence an individual's choice of medical provider. If a recommendation for a provider of a medical service is requested, the VR counselor should provide the individual with a representative list of several appropriate practitioners from which the individual may make a selection.

### Medical Fee Exception

An exception to the established medical fee may be made only if the medical service is not available from a practitioner who will accept the established fee. Prior approval of the exception must be obtained from Senior Management. The district manager should submit the request to Senior Management and include supporting justification.

### Low Vision Exam

When indicated on the eye examination report or when deemed necessary by the VR counselor, a Low Vision Exam should be obtained from an appropriate eye specialist.

### Types of Eye Specialists

An ophthalmologist is a Doctor of Medicine (MD) who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of eye diseases. An ophthalmologist can perform ophthalmic surgery when necessary and can prescribe glasses, contact lenses and low vision aids.

An optometrist is a Doctor of Optometry (OD) who is trained to examine the eyes and determine vision abnormalities and, in some cases, can detect eye diseases and make referrals to an ophthalmologist when appropriate. An optometrist prescribes glasses, contact lenses, low vision aids and provides consultation on other visual aids (equipment) and appliances.

### Supplemental Medical Examinations

The purpose of supplemental medical examinations during the VR process is to gain information about an individual's functional capabilities or treatment needs which may impact the applicant's eligibility, rehabilitation needs, employment goal and plan for services.

Supplemental medical exams can include an examination by an endocrinologist for an applicant with diabetes, or an examination by a neurologist for an individual with a known or suspected seizure disorder.

If existing medical reports are not available or are inadequate based on the VR counselor's judgement or supervisory/medical consultation, the VR counselor should obtain a new examination.

### Otological or Audiological Examinations

The purpose of the otological or audiological examination is to evaluate an individual's hearing and provide information for further planning. If a hearing loss is indicated on the Confidential Health Assessment or other medical reports or if the VR counselor suspects hearing loss, a comprehensive hearing evaluation should be obtained.

### Provision of Audiological Aids

NYSCB may provide audiological aids for individuals who require the aid to participate in VR services and function in employment. The provision of audiological aids is contingent upon the individual's economic need status unless the individual meets the definition of deaf-blind and is identified as deaf-blind on the VR Intake form/VR Eligibility Determination Worksheet. See Chapter 8.00, Services for Individuals who are Deaf-Blind, for additional information.

### Psychological Evaluations

A psychological evaluation may be obtained to assess an individual's behavior, personality and cognitive abilities to gather information for determining eligibility, assessing rehabilitation needs and developing and implementing an IPE.

A psychological evaluation is a process of testing that uses a combination of techniques to better understand an individual's behavior, personality and capabilities. Psychological testing is performed by a licensed psychologist.

Existing psychological evaluations may suffice if reasonably current and can be obtained, from schools, clinics, community agencies, public and private organizations, and certified or licensed psychologists.

### Psychiatric Evaluation

A psychiatric evaluation may be obtained to diagnose emotional, behavioral, or developmental disorders when an individual experiences or reports problems that interfere with participating in rehabilitation services and/or employment. Information from a psychiatric evaluation can be used to gather information for determining eligibility, assessing rehabilitation needs and developing and implementing an IPE.

The psychiatrist will request a description of behaviors and symptoms and how these effect work performance, school performance, relationships and interactions with others. The psychiatric interview will include a discussion of personal and family history of emotional, behavioral, or developmental disorders. A psychiatrist may ask for educational assessments and speech and language assessments.

### Assessments to Evaluate Substance Use

Diagnosis of substance use or a history of substance use does not preclude eligibility for VR services, however assessments to evaluate the impact of the substance use may need to be conducted as part of the eligibility process. This applies to individuals who are applying for services for the first time as well as individuals who have previously received services from NYSCB.

The assessment can include obtaining reports from health care providers and from the individual regarding sobriety information and the individual's ability to engage in the VR process and in employment. The assessment should also address the following factors:

1. Does the individual acknowledge their substance use and actively participate in treatment?
2. Length of time the individual has not engaged in substance use
3. Medical issues that may impact participation in services and employment

If the individual is determined eligible for services, further assessments may be needed if substance use interferes with participation in services or employment at any time during the VR process.

### Neurological Evaluation

A neurological evaluation may be obtained if the individual has a neurological disorder such as Parkinson's disease, stroke or epilepsy to gather information for determining eligibility, assessing rehabilitation needs and developing and implementing the IPE.

A neurological evaluation assesses any abnormalities of the brain, spinal cord, and the nerves that connect these areas to other parts of the body that can cause problems with daily functioning. This includes an examination of an individual's speech, awareness of environment, motor function and balance (walking ability, muscle strength, and tone), sensation, reflexes and coordination,

### Neuropsychological Evaluation

A neuropsychological evaluation may be obtained if the individual has a history of traumatic brain injury or learning disability to gather information for determining eligibility, assessing rehabilitation needs and developing and implementing the IPE.

A neuropsychological evaluation is an assessment of how one's brain functions, which provides information about the structural and functional integrity of the brain. The neuropsychological evaluation involves an interview and the administration of tests. Neuropsychological tests are standardized tools which evaluate functioning in a number of areas including: intelligence, executive functions (such as planning, abstraction, conceptualization), attention, memory, language, perception, sensorimotor functions, motivation, mood state and emotion, quality of life, and personality styles.

### Economic Need

The provision of medical assessment services is **not** contingent upon an individual's economic need status. See Chapter 5.00, Determination of Economic Need, for additional information.

### Non-Medical Assessments and Evaluations

Non-medical assessments and evaluations may be needed to determine an individual's eligibility for VR services, to develop an IPE and/or during implementation of the IPE. Examples of non-medical assessments are: vocational assessments, academic achievement or educational assessments, rehabilitation engineering or technology evaluations.

See the Comprehensive Services Contract (CSC) Guidelines for further information about the Vocational Training Baseline and Academic Instruction Baseline services. See Section 9.04, Assistive Technology for further information about Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Assessments.

### Use of Other Assessment Information

Other assessments should provide sufficient information to allow the participant and the VR counselor to gain a greater understanding of the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and needs (including the need for supported employment). Assessments should be conducted in the most integrated setting possible, consistent with the informed choice of the individual.