Although many are still willing and eager to work, experienced workers are aging and retiring faster than they can be replaced. In fact, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, American businesses could face a multimillion worker shortage by 2010.

As a result of these shortages, businesses may eventually have to turn to alternative labor pools, such as the growing population of aging baby boomers and people with disabilities, to fill many of these positions.

Deciding on a career is not always easy, however, for people of any age or ability, and these individuals might want to explore the education and employment options that might be available to them. Moreover, although the chance to get early positive work experience can be a critical part of career success, the chance to learn about education and employment opportunities and to get experience is rarely available to young people with disabilities.

This may be where Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) can help.

What is VR?
Vocational Rehabilitation is the national program for assisting eligible people with disabilities to define a meaningful career goal and become employed. Each state capital has a central VR agency and satellite offices throughout the state that can be found in the telephone directory under the STATE listing for Rehabilitative Services or Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Who may apply?
VR is an eligibility program, not an entitlement program. Decisions about eligibility and the services you may need are made on an individual basis. You may apply for the program if:
- You are legally eligible to work in the United States.
- You have a physical, mental or emotional disability.
- The disability keeps you from finding or keeping a job.
- You are willing and able to work.

How does the program work?
VR accomplishes its mission through Vocational Counseling and Guidance, VR Services, Training and Education, and Job Placement.

1. Vocational Counseling and Guidance. A counselor will work individually with you to provide support and assistance to reach your goal. The services you receive will depend on what you and your counselor agree is needed to help you become employed. This service helps you better understand your potential, set realistic job goals, change your job goal when needed, and learn good work habits. The information assessment process may include:
   - Information about your disability, education, and social or family situation
   - An evaluation of your knowledge, skills, abilities and interests
   - An assessment of your work history, work habits, and work tolerances
   - A review of the local job market
   - An evaluation of your assistive technology needs to determine necessary workplace accommodations
   - An analysis of your salary and benefits needs

2. VR Services. VR services are broadly defined as any goods or services needed to help you find employment. Following a diagnostic evaluation, you may receive one or more of the following services.
- Assessment Services identify your strengths and limitations through medical, psychiatric, social and psychological evaluation.
- Vocational Assessment identifies your interests, readiness for work, skills, and local job opportunities.
- Counseling and Guidance establishes an ongoing relationship between you and the counselor as you explore the evaluation results and develop a realistic work plan.
- Restoration increases your work potential through the use of medical treatments related to your disability.
- Job Preparation helps you develop work skills to enable you to find employment. This may be accomplished through volunteer experience, on-the-job training, vocational education or classroom training.
- Support Services may include transportation assistance, buying tools or equipment, or support for independent living.
- Job Placement assists in developing work opportunities and finding a job suited to your interests and abilities.
- Independent-Living Services provide evaluations and services that can help you deal with daily living issues that can affect your rehabilitation and employment goals. Examples include accessing
4. **Job Placement.** Though the VR program helps individuals become job-ready, it is not an employment agency. When you are ready, you will need to look for a job just like people without disabilities. However, VR will help you in your search. For example, VR will help you find job leads, fill out applications, write a resume, or practice for and set up job interviews. In addition, VR can help you deal with disability issues at work, such as:• Settling into your new job and lifestyle• Learning what to say about your disability to interviewers, your employer, or co-workers• Negotiating with an employer for any changes to your job duties, worksite modifications, or devices needed due to your disability.

**RELATED EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES**

**Student Transition Programs**
Transition programs provide support and guidance to students with disabilities as they move from high school to the workplace. These programs can help students identify career interests and learn about the skills and training needed to prepare for careers in those fields.

**HEATH Resource Center**
www.heath.gwu.edu

**National Center on Secondary Education and Transition**
www.ncset.org

**National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities**
National Directory

**Resources for Adults with Disabilities**
www.nichcy.org/pubs/transum/adult.pdf

**National Transition Network**
http://ici2.umn.edu/ntn

**Seniors**
Some employment services are designed to increase older workers’ employment opportunities in the general labor market and in community service. Income-eligible individuals 55 and older are recruited, trained and referred to job openings with local employers with the ultimate goal to place them in nonsubsidized employment.

**Administration on Aging**
www.aoa.gov/index.asp

**Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)**
www.doleta.gov/seniors/HTML_Docs/Docs/AboutSCSEP.cfm

**AARP**
www.aarp.org/money/careers

**Experience Works**
www.experienceworks.org

**The National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.**
www.ncba-aged.org/#

**Senior Service America**
www.seniorserviceamerica.org

**Cool Works**
www.coolworks.com/older-bolder

**Veterans**
The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers income, medical, educational, and VR services to qualified veterans.

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**
www.va.gov

**Center for Veterans Enterprise**
www.vetbiz.gov

**Disability Employment (General)**
In Home Products: Employment and Education Resources
www.inhomeproducts.com/Employment.html

**Just One Break**
www.justonebreak.com

**Job Accommodation Network – (with links)**
www.jan.wvu.edu/links/employ.htm#
Emp-Disability

**WORKSUPPORT.COM**
www.worksupport.com

**Vocational Rehabilitation State Offices**
http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/sbses/VOCREHAB.HTM

**Federal Employment of People with Disabilities**
www.opm.gov/disability

**America’s Career InfoNet**
www.acinet.org/acinet/default.asp

**America’s Job Bank**
www.ajb.org

**CareerOneStop**
www.careeronestop.org

**Job-Hunt.Org**
www.job-hunt.org

**JobAccess**
www.jobaccess.org

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