

Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT (CSPD) AGREEMENT

For Counselors/Instructional Staff Not Currently Eligible to Sit for the CRC or ACVREP Exam

Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS) requires that counselors/instructional staff 1) have a relevant master's degree and 2) are eligible to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC), Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist (CVRT) or Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) exam. New counselors/instructional staff who do not meet these requirements are expected to complete their master's degree and become eligible to sit for the exam within 48 months from the date of hire. Some, who already have a related master's degree, may be required to take additional classes that will enable them to sit for the CRC exam. (See Categories R and D for CRC). VRBS assistance will be considered on a case-by-case basis for these categories.

WAGE INCREASES

Upon completion of a master's degree and subsequent eligibility to sit for the CRC/ACVREP exam, an employee in good standing will be granted a raise according to the wage specifications in the current Collective Bargaining Agreement. If the employee chooses to take the exam and passes it, s/he will be granted a raise beyond that granted upon completion of a master's degree. As noted above, raises will be granted according to the wage specifications in the current Collective Bargaining Agreement. For specific wage information described in the current Collective Bargaining Agreement, please contact the VRBS Trainer.

The following is a three-part worksheet that will guide you through the process. Please read through the entire document to ensure your understanding and follow through of all requirements.

RESOURCES

Federal funding, state funding, and personal funding will combine to help counselors achieve the above noted requirements. Scholarships are available through VRBS's federal partner, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). These scholarships are granted to and administered by universities across the country.

The following table illustrates cost share considerations.

RSA Scholarships	VRBS	Counselor/CVRT/COMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuition and Fees Books Travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One graduate school application fee. Books, up to \$100 per semester, if not covered by scholarship* Required travel, up to two trips, if not covered by scholarship—contingent on DPHHS approval <p>*Additional funds—beyond \$100—may be provided if VRBS funds are available.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrance Testing Fees (GRE or MAT) Application fees above \$100, transcript fees, etc. Tuition and fees not covered by scholarship Incidental expenses—school supplies postage, copying, etc. Book costs above \$100 per semester Travel not covered by scholarship or state Any other miscellaneous fees not covered by the scholarship CRC or ACVREP exam fees <p>VRBS may assist with these costs if funds are available.</p>

If a staff member cannot get an RSA scholarship, then s/he is responsible for the costs for which the scholarship would normally pay.

PROGRAM CHOICE

With guidance from the VRBS Trainer, the counselor/VRT/OM will choose his/her education program. When choosing a program, the employee must consider the following criteria:

- The program must be accredited by the Council of Rehabilitation Educators (CORE).
- The program must have the ability to provide RSA scholarships.
- The program must offer online coursework (MSU Billings is an exception for those who reside in Billings.)
- The program must be both appropriate and cost effective; i.e., it does not result in unnecessary expense for VRBS (e.g. excessive time away from work for employee).

TRAINING TIMELINE

Employee responsibilities are described in the table below.

Within 6 Months of Hire	Within 18 Months of Hire	Within 48 Months of Hire
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Together with supervisor complete Part 1 on page 3 and email copy to Trainer. 2. Research which RSA approved online program best fits needs and apply to the program. 3. Apply for an RSA scholarship. 4. Complete all notification steps outlined in Section 2 of the form. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin taking classes. 2. Provide VRBS Trainer with documentation of scholarship amount and scope (i.e., what it covers on school letterhead). 3. Keep VRBS Trainer apprised of any changes in education plan. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide documentation of graduation to VRBS Trainer (diploma or final transcripts)** 2. Provide CRC/ACVREP number & expiration date to VRBS Trainer upon passing the exam. ** <p>**These steps are necessary to ensure that you will be granted a raise.</p>

IMPORTANT UNDERSTANDINGS & REQUIREMENTS

1. Work time may not be used for school work. However, with supervisor's approval, counselors/instructional staff may use work time for tests requiring proctoring.
2. Counselors/instructional staff may use their work computers outside of work to complete coursework.
3. Counselors/instructional staff must meet GPA requirements specified by their graduate program and the RSA scholarship agreement. VRBS cannot pay for outstanding tuition and fees due to the loss of scholarship funds from an insufficient GPA.
4. Work time will be granted for up to two (2) trips to complete required on-campus course work.
5. Counselors/instructional staff is required to provide information from the school on official letterhead describing scholarship amount and scope (what scholarship pays for) to the VRBS Trainer.
6. The Counselors/instructional staff is required to keep VRBS Trainer apprised of any change in funding (increase or decrease) of RSA scholarship.

7. If Counselors/instructional staff requires an advance from VRBS to pay for books, the Counselors/instructional staff will be responsible to provide reimbursement to VRBS upon receipt of scholarship monies; counselor must keep all receipts to track what is owed and submit them along with payment to VRBS.
8. Counselors/instructional staff must inform the VRBS Trainer, in writing, of any lengthy interruptions (one or more semesters) of his/her education plan. Document must include brief explanation and a goal date for return to education plan. Counselors/instructional staff will be expected to resume his/her education program within 6 months of the interruption.
9. In exchange for its investment, like RSA, VRBS expects Counselors/instructional staff who have received MVR assistance to complete their education plans and to commit, in good faith, to two (2) years of service for every one (1) year of assistance received. The repayment period begins *after* completion of the required Master's degree.
10. Counselors/instructional staff who choose to sit for the CRC or ACVREP exam will pay their own exam fees and expenses incurred to travel to/from the exam, and will use personal time to take the exam.
11. Upon completion of education and/or successful passing of the CRC or ACVREP exam, the Counselors/instructional staff is responsible to provide documentation to the VRBS Trainer before a wage increase can be awarded. Pay raises will be activated the first day of the pay period in which the documentation of completion is received. Employees are responsible to maintain certification status in good standing and apprise VRBS Trainer of renewal date.

See Agreement Worksheet on following page...

AGREEMENT WORKSHEET

My signature below indicates that I have read, understood, and agreed to the expectations noted above. As specified in my employment agreement, I understand that a failure to adhere to the above expectations may result in suspension and/or termination of employment with Montana Vocational Rehabilitation.

Section 1: AGREEMENT

To complete the first section of this form: 1) employee inputs his/her start date, 2) employee and supervisor review and sign, 2. Supervisor scans and emails form to the VRBS Trainer for signature. **Keep a copy of this document close by to help you remember to complete the following steps in Sections 2 and 3.**

Employee Start Date: _____

Employee Signature/ Date: _____

Supervisor Signature/ Date: _____

VRBS Trainer Signature /Date: _____

Section 2: EDUCATION

Complete the following steps. You may choose to check them off as you go to remind yourself of which steps still require completion.

____ Email the VRBS Trainer 1) the name of the education program to which you have applied and 2) the date of your application to the program.

____ Scan and email a copy of your acceptance letter from the education program to the VRBS Trainer.

____ Scan and email a copy of your RSA Scholarship Award letter to the VRBS Trainer.

____ Email the VRBS Trainer the following information:

1. Your goal date by when you plan to complete your Master's degree coursework
2. Whether or not you plan to sit for the certification exam

____ Scan and email a copy of your diploma to the VRBS Trainer.

Section 3: Certification

If you have elected to sit for the certification exam, simply complete the following step:

____ Scan and email a copy of your Certification to the VRBS Trainer