

## **Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired**

### **Guidance Document**

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

[Chapter 1 VRCBVI Programs and Services \(Overview\)](#)  
[Chapter 2 Admission Criteria, Referral, and Application](#)  
[Chapter 3 Student's Rights, Responsibilities, and Expectations](#)  
[Chapter 4 Residential](#)  
[Chapter 5 Campus Security and Facility Use](#)  
[Chapter 6 VRCBVI Programs and Services](#)  
[Chapter 7 Case Files and Records Management](#)

## Chapter 1 VRCBVI Programs and Services (Overview)

**Purpose:** The purpose of this section is to provide readers with information about the services and programs offered at VRCBVI.

### Program Introduction & Overview

VRCBVI provides training in the skills of blindness, including using braille and specialized computer software, orientation and mobility, and personal and home management. Learning these adaptive skills enable individuals with vision loss to be independent and successful in the home, in school, on the job, and in their communities.

Emphasizing self-sufficiency and independence, VRCBVI strives to empower students to take charge of their own lives. Training is provided which teaches eligible individuals who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind to function independently, safely, and efficiently. The training program at VRCBVI has been designed to teach students skills of blindness, provide community-based work experiences, and promote confidence-building activities, which will give students the freedom to pursue their chosen careers and interests.

Most training programs at VRCBVI are individually tailored to meet the specific needs of the student. Special programs are offered that provide specific training to groups of students with similar needs, such as the LIFE program (Learning Independence, Feeling Empowered) and LEAP (Learning Excellence in Academics Program) for transition-aged students. Other examples of special programs offered are the Senior Retreat for individuals aged 55 and older who are blind and vision impaired and Saturday Technology Seminars. In addition to these programs, VRCBVI regularly develops short-term programs to meet current needs of individuals receiving Vocational Rehabilitation Services, such as Take Action, Take Charge, and the Robotics and Cyber Security Academy.

### VRCBVI and Collaboration with Regional Offices

VRCBVI's primary referral source is DBVI's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, the mission of which is to provide employment services leading to competitive integrated employment. In order for VRCBVI to develop and maintain optimum utilization of its services, VRCBVI must effectively correlate their services with VR's mission. VRCBVI integrates workplace readiness skills into all of its training programs. An additional key component is the development and maintenance of strong partnerships with the DBVI regional offices.

Effective collaboration between DBVI's field staff and VRCBVI centers around ongoing communication, planning, and a shared intentional focus on meeting the employment related needs of the students served. Such collaboration best ensures that:

1. VRCBVI's programming (both its core training and short-term work readiness programs) is meeting the needs of the students as referred to VRCBVI by the regional office staff;
2. VRCBVI's training programs are designed to meet the needs of the current and future employment market;
3. Referrals to VRCBVI are appropriate, i.e., there is a strong correlation between the training needs of the student and the programming offered by VRCBVI; and
4. Students are much more likely to succeed through an interdisciplinary team that effectively integrates multiple perspectives and differing skillsets in the provision of services.

## **A. Programs**

VRCBVI offers a core curriculum which is required for all full-time residential students. The student's training team will work with the student to determine training strategies -- nonvisual, visual, or a combination of both -- that will work best to meet the individual needs of the student.

VRCBVI provides rehabilitation services for most students in a residential setting; training is also available to commuter students who return to their homes in the evenings and on weekends.

VRCBVI offers instruction in skills of blindness, i.e., braille, personal and home management (cooking, cleaning, organizing, labeling, and budgeting), orientation and mobility (cane travel), keyboarding, computer and access technology, adult basic education (including GED, GRE, and professional certification exam preparation, and ESL), conversations about blindness, and health education. Classes are from 8:15 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday. Students who reside in the dorm take a full schedule of classes and will have a residence to return to when VRCBVI closes at certain points throughout the year (e.g., during the summer, holidays, weather emergencies, etc.). Students who commute each day to VRCBVI can choose to attend full or part time.

Based on the student's individual needs, services include, but are not limited to:

1. Tours of the VRCBVI Campus
2. Evaluation
3. Training

## DBVI VRCBVI Guidance Document 2024

4. Case Management Services
5. Vocational Services
6. Low Vision services
7. Technology Seminars
8. Summer Transition Programs for High School Students
9. Competency based training for DBVI/VRCBVI Staff

### **VRCBVI Classes and Services**

1. Orientation and Mobility (Cane Travel)
2. Access Technology
3. Keyboarding
4. Computers
5. Career Readiness
6. Employment Readiness Seminars
7. Personal and Home Management
8. Adult Basic Education
9. Braille
10. Diabetes/Health Education
11. Conversations About Blindness

The training programs at VRCBVI are geared toward building skill proficiency, promoting independence, and developing self-confidence so individuals are prepared to achieve their vocational or independent living goals. The majority of training at VRCBVI revolves around employment preparedness for individuals looking to enter into or maintain work. Classes are designed to help the student relate knowledge gained to employment:

1. **Travel skills** learned in Orientation and Mobility classes help prepare the student to make travel related decisions to get to and from work each day and move around their workplace independently;
2. **Time management and organizational/problem-solving skills** build confidence in dealing with workplace challenges;
3. For some, developing **braille skills** allows the individual to manage information and determine locations as they travel to and around their workplace (i.e., reading signage in buildings) more effectively.
4. Students gain necessary **keyboarding/computer skills**, which are essential in today's workplace.

### **B. Tours of VRCBVI**

Individuals who are interested in training at VRCBVI are strongly encouraged to take a tour of the facilities as a first step. Tours of the VRCBVI Campus are available to potential students and their family members, DBVI VR Counselors and Rehabilitation

## DBVI VRCBVI Guidance Document 2024

Teachers, interested stakeholders, and members of the public. Tours include the dormitory and provide an overview of the training programs.

Tours are recommended for prospective students to:

1. Familiarize the student with the facilities;
2. Meet staff and other students
3. Hear about VRCBVI services from staff and current students;
4. Address any questions or concerns (i.e., ongoing medical conditions, such as diabetes management, or other issues that may affect training).

### **Scheduling of Tours**

Tours of VRCBVI's campus may be coordinated by directly contacting VRCBVI's front desk at (804) 371-3151. If the individual is working with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher, the DBVI staff person can coordinate the tour. Complimentary lunch will be provided for the touring student and family members. A tour typically takes 45 minutes to an hour, but additional time should be allowed for lunch and questions.

### **Procedure**

1. Tours can be requested by the referring DBVI staff member, the individual, or their family, and are initiated by calling the VRCBVI front desk who will refer the call to the assigned VRCBVI staff member
2. VRCBVI administration (Director, Assistant Director for Administration, or Assistant Director for Instruction) will assign a staff member (or approved student) to conduct the tour.
3. The tour date and time will be confirmed with the individual requesting the tour.

## **Chapter 2 Admission Criteria, Referral, and Application**

Before being referred to VRCBVI for training, the individual, the VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher must review the VRCBVI Admission Criteria to determine if the individual who is interested in training. In addition to the admission criteria, the referring DBVI staff member must consider other factors that will be considered as part of the admissions review process. For example:

1. Appropriate candidates for VRCBVI training must have the necessary independence to manage their daily living activities, including management of health conditions and medication;
2. Individuals who have any prior criminal history, or who have a history of substance abuse, may need to provide evidence that this will not impact their participation in training;

The VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher must also determine with the prospective student whether there are other issues or concerns that may impact the decision to apply for services at VRCBVI. For example, are there issues related to secondary disabilities (traumatic brain injury, mental health, diabetes, etc.) that must be considered? Has necessary information been gathered regarding these and other possible needs that would affect training?

Guidance and counseling with the individual prior to referral is an important step to ensure that the referring DBVI staff member is able to provide all necessary information as part of the application process, and that the individual has made an informed choice to pursue training at VRCBVI. A staffing with VRCBVI concerns, either on the part of the referring staff member or of the individual, management regarding the individual prior to application is a best practice, particularly if there are any specific

### **VRCBVI Funding and Order of Selection – Impact on Referrals**

An individual's Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) or Rehabilitation Teacher (RT) may make referrals to VRCBVI. VRCBVI will serve individuals who are open for VR services, as well as individuals who are open for RT services (but are not open for VR services). However, due to VRCBVI's funding, VR students will be given priority.

### **Wait List**

VRCBVI has a limit to the number of students they are able to serve at any given time. The maximum number of students may vary depending on the number of residential students participating in training as compared to non-residential students. Should

VRCBVI management determine the need to delay entry into training for students who have been approved for admission, a wait list will be created. VRCBVI will prioritize service to individuals who have an open VR case before serving individuals receiving RT services who are on the wait list.

VRCBVI provides services without discrimination with regard to race, color, creed, sex, national origin, age, or disability, in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

## **A. Admission Criteria**

Individuals seeking admission to VRCBVI must meet the following criteria:

1. Be 18 years of age or older.
2. Be blind, vision impaired, or deafblind;
3. Have a residence in which return if it becomes necessary to leave VRCBVI immediately;
4. Have the ability to participate in, and benefit from, group instruction (i.e., does not require staff-intensive instructional support, such as 1:1);
5. Be determined eligible to receive Vocational Rehabilitation services to seek, gain, or retain competitive integrated employment, or are seeking improved independence skills as part of the Rehabilitation Teaching/Independent Living program.

In addition to the Admission Criteria above, VRCBVI will review other considerations as part of the admission process. These include, but are not limited to:

- Is the individual able to ambulate independently (i.e., on their own, using a wheelchair, etc.) or with the assistance of personal attendant services?
- Is the individual able to perform activities of daily living (such as toileting, hygiene, dressing, and feeding) independently or with personal attendant services?
- Does the individual have the physical stamina to participate in training (i.e., stamina to maintain participation in training activities for a typical workday)?
- Is the individual able to independently manage health and medication (i.e., without assistance or supervision)?
- Does the individual have stable health to participate in training? (i.e., no chronic health issues that will prohibit regular participation in training activities; no periodic/acute health issues that might interrupt programming on an excessive basis).
- Is there any evidence of current or past behavior that could jeopardize the health, safety, or rehabilitation program of self or others at VRCBVI?

- Referrals of individuals who have any recent history of substance abuse or dependence must demonstrate evidence that they have been abstinent for an extended period of time (minimum of 6 months) or have documented evidence of recent completion of an intensive outpatient (or inpatient) substance abuse treatment and/or active participation in a substance abuse aftercare program or a substance abuse support program (such as a twelve-step program).

### **Additional Considerations**

1. Policy regarding referrals of individuals with any history of a criminal offense (self-report, criminal background check, information from courts, correctional institutions, etc.) is as follows:
  - a. Individuals who are registered sex offenders may not be referred for residential services at VRCBVI ([Virginia State Police Sex Offender Registry](#)).
  - b. Information regarding any criminal history, including but not limited to results from a criminal background check (CBC), will be reviewed by the VR counselor with the Regional Manager to determine what information, if any, may be relevant to share with VRCBVI Admissions Team. Consultation with the Director of Workforce and Vocational Rehabilitation Services is recommended, as needed.
  - c. The CBC report shall not be shared with VRCBVI staff; a summary of any criminal offense information, to include but not limited to the CBC report, that is relevant to the VRCBVI admissions process will be shared, either in writing, to be included with the VRCBVI admissions application, or through a staffing process.
  - d. It is highly recommended that the VR Counselor communicate any relevant criminal history directly to the VRCBVI Director prior to initiating the application process. The involvement of the Regional Manager and/or the Director of Workforce and Vocational Rehabilitation services is recommended, as well.

There are other factors that VRCBVI may not be able to evaluate effectively as part of the admissions process, but historically have been strong indicators of successful participation. These include:

1. Willingness to regularly and actively participate in all scheduled classes and activities;
2. Ability to transfer and apply skills learned from one setting to another;



3. Ability to live cooperatively in an adult residential setting (if the student will be residential)
4. Ability and willingness to comply and conform to VRCBVI policies and procedures as set forth in the [VRCBVI Student Handbook](#) (see Repository).

## **B. Referral and Application**

### **Application for VRCBVI Services**

VR Counselors or Rehabilitation Teachers seeking admission for individuals on their caseloads to participate in training at VRCBVI are required to complete an application packet. With the assistance of the individual interested in attending VRCBVI, the VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher completes and submits an application packet to VRCBVI on behalf of the applicant.

1. The **application packet** includes the following:
  - Service Authorization
  - VRCBVI Referral Part 2
  - Eye Report (within one year)
  - Health Checklist – General Medical Examination Form (within one year)

Steps in the application for admissions process:

1. Application Packet submission,
2. Application review,
3. Admission decision,
4. Notification of admission decision to the applicant and referring VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher, and,
5. The pre-admission phone call.

The VRCBVI application packet will include the following information:

### **VRCBVI APPLICATION PACKET CHECKLIST**

The following information will be provided by the referring VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher:

1. A service authorization from the referring staff person;
2. VRCBVI Referral Part 2;
3. Eye report with best-corrected visual acuity and visual fields dated within one year of the VRCBVI application;

DBVI VRCBVI  
Guidance Document 2024

4. DBVI health checklist/general medical examination form completed and signed by a physician dated within one year of VRCBVI application that includes a list of all current medications.
5. If applicant meets the criteria for DeafBlind services, the individual must be referred to DeafBlind services prior to submitting application to VRCBVI (per DeafBlind Services Policy and Procedures Directive DS-PPD-15-12, dated June 2, 2015)
6. Any information, including appropriate documentation regarding any additional non-vision related disabilities (as appropriate) or history. This may include pertinent documented medical or health concerns, psychiatric and/or psychological reports, etc. The reports must be recent (within 60 days) noting stability and compliance with any prescribed medications.
7. For individuals who have had a brain injury (including traumatic, stroke, etc.) a neuropsychological evaluation (within 2 years) is needed, and the case will be staffed as a team with the Assistant Director for Instruction and the DARS Brain Injury Specialist.
8. Any additional documentation upon request (e.g., documentation that references secondary disabilities, but does not provide information as to the functional limitations that may impact services at VRCBVI, may require more information).

## **VRCBVI Application – Initial Review**

### **Application Review**

The Assistant Director for Administration has responsibility for receiving the application for services at VRCBVI and for ensuring the completeness of the application. Upon receipt of the VRCBVI application, the Assistant Director for Administration reviews the application materials and the applicant's case record in the agency case management system to ensure that the application is complete and contains the required components. Incomplete applications will unnecessarily delay the admissions process.

The Assistant Director for Administration will communicate with the referring DBVI staff member when there are questions regarding an application and/or the need for additional documentation.

NOTE: The application review process must be completed in a timely manner so that an admissions decision is not unnecessarily delayed. To the extent practicable, the VRCBVI Assistant Director for Administration will request any necessary additional information or documentation resulting from the application review from the referring DBVI staff member within three business days, and will document the rationale for the request.

## Admission Process

The VRCBVI Admissions Committee is comprised of the:

1. VRCBVI Director
2. Assistant Director for Instruction
3. Assistant Director for Administration
4. Health Educator, where medical conditions of the applicant necessitate
5. Content experts (as needed), who may include:
  - a. Senior Regional Manager
  - b. Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services
  - c. Rehabilitation Teaching/Independent Living Services Director
  - d. Deputy Commissioner for Services
  - e. Other content experts as determined necessary

## Admission Decision

Admission decisions are determined by the VRCBVI Admissions Committee and will be made within 10 business days of receiving the completed VRCBVI application from the Assistant Director of Administration. If the Admissions Committee needs additional information, or if it is determined that a Program Manager's review is warranted, this time will be extended. Any additional requests for information must be documented and justified with a clear rationale for the request.

Admissions are made on a rolling basis.

There are three potential admission decision outcomes: accepted, provisional acceptance, and not accepted:

1. **Accepted:** The individual referred for services has fully met all admission criteria.
2. **Provisional Acceptance:** Determination of acceptance/non-acceptance is deferred. For example, the individual may need to participate in an evaluation period to assess whether the individual has the stamina to participate in training. Another example would be if the individual is not able to manage medical conditions independently or self-administer medications, the individual may be required to participate in VRCBVI-provided Health Education services in his or her home community prior to acceptance, etc.
3. **Not Accepted:** The individual referred for services has not met one or more of the admission criteria.

NOTE: VRCBVI typically uses a four-week period as the standard initial evaluation. This is primarily to determine the appropriate training methodologies to be utilized, to establish training goals, etc. In some circumstances, a student may be accepted for

## DBVI VRCBVI Guidance Document 2024

services or accepted provisionally, and VRCBVI may determine the need for a shorter evaluation to address any specific admission questions or concerns. The student may also use the evaluation period to determine whether he or she wishes to continue services at VRCBVI.

If a determination is made by the VRCBVI Admissions Committee that a referral will not be accepted or will be provisionally accepted, that determination will be referred by VRCBVI's Director to the appropriate program director for review. The VRCBVI Director will provide to the program director any necessary referral information and the rationale for not accepting the individual or for accepting them on a provisional basis. The designated program director will determine the review process on a case-by-case basis. That is, a basic review via phone or email, or, as needed, a request for a meeting with the VRCBVI Director and other VRCBVI staff involved in the admission decision. The reviewer may request additional staff to participate in the review as needed (e.g., the Regional Manager and/or the referring DBVI staff person, the VRCBVI Health Educator, etc.).

The review will result in an admission decision. The VRCBVI Director will notify the referring DBVI staff member or the referred individual of the referral results per the procedure outlined below. In the event that the VRCBVI Director and the program director are unable to agree on an admissions decision, either may appeal to the Deputy Commissioner for Services for a final determination.

### **Re-referrals of previous VRCBVI students**

**Purpose:** To ensure that individuals who were previously served at VRCBVI, particularly those for whom there were identified challenges that impacted training, have addressed the identified challenges, and that any recommendations made by VRCBVI staff were followed.

If an individual was previously served by VRCBVI and is reapplying for services, the referring VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher must provide information as part of the application process regarding the rationale for a re-referral. For example, if the individual was unable to complete the program due to illness, disability related issues, or behavior/conduct issues, the referring staff member must provide information regarding how those issues have been addressed so that the individual can effectively participate in training.

A staffing by the referring DBVI staff member with the VRCBVI Director and/or the VRCBVI admissions team (VRCBVI Director, Assistant Director for Administration) is strongly recommended prior to reapplication to ensure that any previous issues have been addressed. The individual may also request an interview with the VRCBVI Director to discuss their interest in attending VRCBVI again. Regional Manager and/or Program Director involvement in this process is recommended, as needed.

## **Notification of Admission Decision**

Once a student is accepted for services at VRCBVI, the Assistant Director for Administration will email the referring DBVI staff member that the student has been accepted and that the VRCBVI Director will be contacting the student directly. The VRCBVI Director will notify the student by phone to determine a start date. The Director will then email appropriate VRCBVI staff, the referring DBVI staff (VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher), and the Regional Manager of the pending start date for services.

The VRCBVI Director will notify the referring DBVI staff member in writing regarding students who are provisionally accepted or not accepted. For individuals who were accepted on a provisional basis, the referring DBVI staff member will be provided with specific written information regarding the reason for deferral, as well as what is expected from the student before an admission decision can be made. For those individuals who are not accepted, the referring DBVI staff member will be given specific written information as to the reason(s), as well as any recommendations that may allow the individual to be re-referred at a future date. A meeting involving VRCBVI administration and the referring DBVI staff member, Regional Manager, and/or the appropriate DBVI program director to further discuss or review the referral, while not required, may be helpful to clarify the rationale for the decision and accompanying recommendations.

In all cases where the individual has been denied or deferred admission, the VRCBVI Director will ensure that the referring DBVI staff is made aware of the appeal rights of the referred individual.

## **C. Orientation to VRCBVI**

### **Orientation for VRCBVI Students**

1. Individuals who are accepted as students of VRCBVI will receive a phone call from VRCBVI administration to establish entry date. The referring DBVI staff member will be notified by email following the establishment of an entry date; VRCBVI staff will also be notified of each new student's entry date.
2. The VRCBVI Administrator (typically the VRCBVI Director) will also communicate to the student and the referring VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher that the student will need to have the ability to take notes throughout their training. The referring DBVI staff member must ensure to the maximum extent feasible that appropriate technology evaluations have been completed, any necessary aids or devices purchased (other than aids or devices obtained through the VRCBVI loaner program), and training provided prior to the student beginning services.
3. VRCBVI will email or mail a "Welcome Packet" within three days of notification of entry date. Packet will include:

DBVI VRCBVI  
Guidance Document 2024

- a. Directions to VRCBVI
  - b. Welcome letter
  - c. **VRCBVI Student Handbook**
  - d. List of items to bring
  - e. Releases and waivers for review and signature (**Photographic Recording Release; Waiver of Liability/Assumption of Risk and Indemnity Agreement; Emergency Medical Care**) – NOTE: The Waiver of Liability/Assumption of Risk form must be signed by the student prior to beginning services at VRCBVI
  - f. Notification of assigned VRCBVI Case Manager
4. The VRCBVI Case Manager will initiate a **pre-admission conference call** with the student and the referring VR Counselor and/or the Rehabilitation Teacher (if available). This will occur at least one week prior to the student's admission date with VRCBVI. The phone call will include:
- a. Role of the VRCBVI Case Manager
  - b. Overview of typical training day and class schedule
  - c. Items the student should bring with them
  - d. VRCBVI amenities
  - e. Development of VRCBVI Individualized Evaluation Plan for the student (goals and objectives for training), including roles and responsibilities of key DBVI staff who are involved in the plan
  - f. Overview of teaching strategies
  - g. Role of student mentor
  - h. Any questions the student or referring DBVI staff member may have.

NOTE: The student will be given the opportunity to identify the specific training methodology they prefer while in training (visual, nonvisual, or a combination). The VRCBVI Case Manager will provide the student and referring DBVI staff member information about VRCBVI training methodologies during the pre-admission conference phone call. The student may make the decision regarding a training method during this call, or may defer that decision until they begin training.

5. New student orientation will occur during the student's first week of evaluation. During this orientation students will:
- a. Tour the VRCBVI campus
  - b. Understand the role of the VRCBVI Case Manager and the training team. The training team includes the student, the referring Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor/Rehabilitation Teacher, assigned VRCBVI instructors, the VRCBVI Case Manager, and other appropriate field staff, as needed.
  - c. Receive student schedule
  - d. Review VRCBVI Student Handbook with the VRCBVI Case Manager
  - e. Meet the VRCBVI Director
  - f. Participate in Health Education Orientation

- g. Learn about evening and weekend activities (student planned and VRCBVI sponsored opportunities)
  - h. Understand the purpose of and opportunities related to Independent Study Friday
  - i. Review the purpose of the VRCBVI Individualized Student Evaluation Plan
  - j. Gain an understanding of how progress is reviewed and reported
  - k. Have the opportunity for questions to be answered
6. Students at VRCBVI are required to use their cane at all times, including nights and weekends (other than in their dormitory room).

## **D. Student Handbook**

The ***VRCBVI Student Handbook*** provides incoming VRCBVI students with a guide to life on the campus. The handbook provides the student with information about campus life, VRCBVI services, training programs, and rules and responsibilities for daily activities and dormitory living. The ***VRCBVI Student Handbook*** will be provided to all students who have been accepted for VRCBVI services prior to their arrival on campus. The Case Manager will ensure that the student has received and reviewed the handbook, and will have the student sign and date the Student Handbook Review Form. It is the student's responsibility to read the Student Handbook prior to participating in services at VRCBVI, and to bring any questions or concerns regarding the Student Handbook to the VRCBVI Case Manager during the orientation review of the handbook. The ***VRCBVI Student Handbook*** is available online at <http://www.vrcbvi.org/> Other formats are available on request. Copies of the handbook may be obtained by contacting the VRCBVI Executive Secretary at (804) 371-3324.

## **Chapter 3 Student's Rights, Responsibilities, and Expectations**

This chapter identifies and provides guidance pertaining to student rights identified through the Rehabilitation Act as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act of 2014, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Regulatory Code of Virginia.

VRCBVI and DBVI staff will develop an understanding of student rights, expectations, and responsibilities to participate in and make informed choices about the training in which they are participating and services they receive at VRCBVI.

### **VRCBVI Policy – Harassment, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation**

VRCBVI is committed to providing a residential and classroom environment conducive to effective learning and free from intimidation, harassment, abuse, neglect, or exploitation in any form.

#### **Mandated Reporters**

By agency policy, all employees at VRCBVI are mandated reporters. Mandated reporters are persons who, because of their profession, are more likely to be aware of abuse or neglect of persons with disabilities. Mandated reporters are required by law to report cases of suspected abuse when they have a suspicion that a person with a disability is being abused or neglected. The staff member who identifies the potential abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a student will inform his or her immediate supervisor, who will then inform the Assistant Director for Administration and the VRCBVI Director. The VRCBVI Director will apprise the Deputy Commissioner for Administration, the Deputy Commissioner for Services, and the DBVI Commissioner of the situation.

1. If a VRCBVI staff member suspects that an individual applying for or receiving VRCBVI services is about to confide abuse, neglect, or exploitation of themselves, a child, or of another adult, the staff member must inform the individual that the VRCBVI staff member is required by law to report complaints to the Department of Social Services. The staff member will further inform the individual that all information relating to the complaint and any forthcoming investigation will remain confidential and will not be released without a judicial order.
2. VRCBVI staff must report, within 72 hours, to the Department of Social Services any suspected abuse or neglect of a child, even if the individual shares the information with the staff member in confidence. The staff member may be subject to a state fine for failing to report the information within 72 hours of first suspicion. The VRCBVI staff member must report the information to the Social Services office in the locality where the individual resides, or where the alleged



incident is believed to have occurred. Suspected child abuse and neglect may also be reported through the Social Services toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline. The report may be oral or in writing (per [§ 63.2-1509 of the Code of Virginia](#)).

3. VRCBVI staff must also immediately report any suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an adult, even if the individual shares the information with the staff member in confidence, to the Adult Protective Services hotline or the Department of Social Services office in the locality where the individual resides or where the abuse, neglect, or exploitation is believed to have occurred. Any VRCBVI staff member who has reason or cause to suspect that an adult has died as a result of abuse or neglect must immediately report this suspicion to the appropriate medical examiner and law enforcement agency.
4. The VRCBVI staff member may be subject to a fine for failing to immediately report the information upon reasonable suspicion, and will be subject to a criminal conviction for making or causing to be made a false report (per [§ 63.2-1606 of the Code of Virginia](#)).

## **Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Informed Choice**

Federal and state law, regulations, and agency policy dictate that DBVI staff and contractors maintain the confidentiality of all individuals served by the agency. As such, VRCBVI staff may not acknowledge whether an individual is or is not a student at VRCBVI without a release of information. If a release of information exists, only the information specified on the release may be shared, and only with the individuals or entities designated by the individual on the release of information. If VRCBVI staff are unsure of whether a release of information exists, they will treat the situation as if one does not exist. In any situation where it is determined that the individual poses a danger to themselves or others, in response to an emergency where medical or police intervention is required, or in compliance with any subsequent court order, necessary information may be shared.

### **A. Student Rights regarding Informed Choice**

Students have the right to make informed choices about their training programs at VRCBVI. Informed choice means that the VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher has provided the student with information that enables the student to make an informed choice about services and training. The VR Counselor and/or the RT and VRCBVI staff provide the student with guidance and counseling to assist the student to make choices about their goals (vocational or independent living goals), and those vocational rehabilitation or independent living services that include evaluation, assessments, or training they receive at VRCBVI. Informed choices made by the student do not obligate VRCBVI or DBVI to purchase specific devices, aids, or Vocational Rehabilitation

services, engage specific service providers, or pay costs above what is allowed by DBVI policy.

Individuals who feel they have not been given the opportunity to exercise informed choice, regardless of the reason, must be informed of the right to appeal the decision. The student's Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Rehabilitation Teacher, and/or VRCBVI staff must provide the student with information about the Client Assistance Program, as well as their specific appeal rights.

## **B. Student Civil Rights**

Students participating in training at VRCBVI have certain civil rights guaranteed by law per the "The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)," Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Regulations (29 CFR Part 38), section 188, which prohibits discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation or belief, or, for beneficiaries, applicants, and participants only, citizenship status, or because of an individual's participation in a program or activity that receives financial assistance under Title I of WIOA.

### **Student Rights - General**

Students participating in training programs at VRCBVI have the following rights:

1. The right to be treated with dignity, respect, and consideration.
2. The right to exercise informed choice and to include their representative, as requested, throughout the service delivery process with VRCBVI.
3. The right to be fully informed, by their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Rehabilitation Teacher, and/or VRCBVI staff, about their rights to review any decisions made by the agency while they are participating in training at VRCBVI.
4. The right to fully participate in all aspects of planning and development of the student's training at VRCBVI.
5. The right to be fully involved with and informed about services, changes, or decisions made regarding their training programs at VRCBVI.
6. The right to ask questions, raise concerns, make comments, and/or suggestions, as needed.
7. The right to receive regular feedback and progress evaluations regarding their training program from VRCBVI program staff.

### **Student Rights Regarding Confidentiality**

Students participating in training at VRCBVI have the right to confidentiality of their personal information.

1. Personal information is defined as all information that describes, locates, or indexes anything about the student who is applying for or receiving VR services, including real or personal property holdings derived from tax returns, education

DBVI VRCBVI  
Guidance Document 2024

records, financial transactions, medical records, ancestry, criminal record, and employment record, or that affords a basis for inferring personal characteristics, such as finger and voice prints, photographs, or things done by or to such individual, including the record of the individual's presence, registration, or membership in an organization or activity, or admission to an institution. Formats for personal information may include, but are not limited to, written records, photographs, audiotapes, videotapes, electronic data, or other media reproductions.

2. Personal information that identifies a student shall not be disclosed to, exchanged with, or requested from another person or entity, unless the student (or the student's representative, as appropriate) gives informed written consent, or unless federal or state law or regulations permit or require release without consent.
3. Students who do not wish to sign a release for VRCBVI to use their photograph or to be in audiotapes, videotapes, electronic, data, or other media reproductions such as Facebook postings will not be denied access to any VRCBVI program or activity.
4. VRCBVI staff will not share any information regarding a student, outside of other DBVI staff, without a written release of information from the student
5. VRCBVI staff will use personal information only for the purposes directly connected with the administration of VRCBVI services. VRCBVI staff may communicate with other DBVI staff members who are serving the student without a release of information.
6. VRCBVI has the authority to disclose requested personal information, including health information, without consent as necessitated by an emergency situation or investigations in connection with law enforcement, fraud, or abuse, unless expressly prohibited by federal or state law or regulations. VRCVBI may also release personal information in order to protect the student or others if the student poses a threat to his or her safety or to the safety of others.
7. Personal information will be released to Adult or Child Protective Services if VRCBVI staff has reason to suspect instances of abuse and neglect as described above in the mandated reporter section, or if required to do so through federal or state regulations.
8. VRCBVI staff shall not respond directly to a subpoena or judicial order. Subpoenas and any other court orders requesting information on VRCBVI students shall be sent to the Deputy Commissioner for Services immediately upon receipt.

### **Student rights to request a review of determinations made by VRCBVI staff**

Students must be made aware of their right to request a review of a determination made by VRCBVI staff that affects the provision of their VRCBVI services. VRCBVI staff must make every effort to address the issue through an informal resolution process.

Should the issue not be resolved informally, VR students have the right to immediately request an Informal Administrative Review (IAR), Mediation, or to move directly to request a Fair Hearing. While a decision is being reviewed, VRCBVI may not suspend, reduce, or terminate services unless:

1. The student requests a suspension, reduction, or termination of a service;
2. VRCBVI has evidence that services have been obtained through the individual's misrepresentation, fraud, collusion, or criminal conduct;
3. The service puts the individual at risk based on new medical or psychological information provided by a physician;
4. VRCBVI personnel have reason to believe that the individual's conduct or action poses a danger to the health and safety of themselves or others.
5. The student's conduct creates an adverse impact on the ability of other students at VRCBVI to participate effectively in their training.

### **Informal Resolution between VRCBVI Students and VRCBVI Staff (VR and RT Students)**

1. VRCBVI staff will make every effort to resolve disputes with the student informally. Many minor disagreements or misunderstandings can be quickly resolved through a short conversation between the student and the staff member involved. The VRCBVI Case Manager and/or staff supervisor (or the Assistant Director for Instruction or Administration, as appropriate to the situation) will be consulted and involved in attempts to resolve the dispute, if necessary. VRCBVI staff must document the individual's concerns and subsequent actions taken to address those concerns in the individual's case file.

### **Informal Resolution between the Student and the Supervisor**

1. When student issues or concerns cannot be resolved informally between the student and staff involved, within ten (10) working days of the decision requiring resolution or the most recent issue, the student may request in writing, by e-mail or phone call, or in person, to speak with the VRCBVI staff member's supervisor.
2. The supervisor shall meet with the student in a timely manner, i.e., within five (5) working days of receipt of the student's request.
3. The supervisor shall make every effort to resolve the concerns of the student through listening to their concerns and providing them with any relevant VRCBVI or DBVI policy or processes that impacted the decision. The supervisor will make

a determination from this meeting to support the VRCBVI staff member's decision, to overturn the decision, or to find a compromise decision to which the student can agree. The supervisor must provide the student with their appeal rights if the issue is not resolved at this point.

4. The supervisor shall document all concerns of the student and subsequent actions taken to address those concerns in the individual's case file and in the form of a letter or memorandum to the student in the student's preferred format;

### **Informal Administrative Review (IAR) - VR Students Only**

1. When issues or concerns of students cannot be resolved between the student and the supervisor, the student may request an **Informal Administrative Review (IAR)** in writing, by e-mail or phone call, or by speaking in person to the Director of VRCBVI or DBVI's Deputy Commissioner for Services.
2. The Director of VRCBVI or Deputy Commissioner for Services shall meet, by phone or in person, with the individual in a timely manner, not to exceed five (5) working days of receipt of the student's request for IAR. The Director of VRCBVI or the Deputy Commissioner for Services shall use the **Informal Administrative Review (IAR)** form to document the results of the meeting
3. The Director of VRCBVI or Deputy Commissioner for Services shall prepare and submit to the student by e-mail, hard copy, or scanned copy, a written report of the IAR within (3) three working days of meeting with the individual.
4. The IAR will contain documentation of review of the student's case file, discussions with relevant VRCBVI and DBVI staff and the student who has requested the IAR, and the rationale of the decision made during the IAR, including identification of relevant laws, regulations, and DBVI policy.
5. The Director of VRCBVI or Deputy Commissioner for Services shall ensure that the report of the IAR is placed in the individual's case file and in AWARE.
6. In circumstances where the student's concerns involve the Director of VRCBVI or Deputy Commissioner for Services, the DBVI Commissioner will conduct the IAR.

### **Mediation – VR Students Only**

Students participating in training at VRCBVI may proceed directly to mediation rather than or concurrently to attempting to resolve the issue through the informal resolution process. Details regarding the mediation process may be found in **Chapter 16: Appeals in the DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Policy and Procedures Manual**.

### **Impartial Due Process Hearing (Fair Hearing) – VR Students Only**

1. Students participating in training may request a review of determinations made by VRCBVI by requesting an Impartial Due Process Hearing, whereby an impartial hearing officer shall be randomly selected, and an impartial due process hearing conducted within 60 days from the individual's request, unless an informal resolution or a mediation agreement is achieved prior to the 60th day or the parties agree to a specific extension of time.

## **C. Student Expectations and Responsibilities**

### **Student Responsibilities - General**

While participating in training at VRCBVI, there are several expectations and responsibilities for students. These expectations and responsibilities are consistent with those an employer would expect of their employees, and therefore play an important role in the student's program at VRCBVI. Students are expected to treat all staff, other students, and visitors with dignity and respect. Discrimination, threatening, or making negative comments to another person based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, sexual orientation, or disability will not be tolerated.

Students participating in training programs at VRCBVI have the following responsibilities:

1. Participate actively in the training program by being punctual, attending class, and participating in required training activities.
2. Cooperate with VRCBVI staff, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, and/or the Rehabilitation Teacher.
3. Comply with VRCBVI and DBVI policies.
4. Respect the rights and privacy of others.
5. Talk with the VRCBVI Case Manager about any changes in the student's program.
6. Tell the VRCBVI Case Manager or instructor when the student has an appointment that will prevent them from attending class.
7. Make informed choices about the services they receive at VRCBVI.
8. Complete all out of class assignments at VRCBVI.

### **D. Employment Lifestyle – Personal Appearance**

The dress code at VRCBVI is business casual, meaning slacks, dresses, skirts, and blouses for women and slacks and collared shirts for men. Students are responsible for maintaining personal dress, grooming, and hygiene standards appropriate for daily interactions in work and community settings.

### **E. Cell Phones**

Students are permitted to use cell phones while in training at VRCBVI. However, the instructor may limit use of cell phones during any specific class should it interfere with or impact classroom activities. Students will follow the cell phone guidelines contained in the VRCBVI Student Handbook.

## **F. Tobacco Use**

All VRCBVI buildings and building entrances, as well as state vehicles, are non-smoking and tobacco product free.

## **G. Attendance**

Students are expected to maintain regular attendance in classes while participating in training at VRCBVI. Instructors shall track and report attendance for all students.

## **H. Tardiness**

Employers expect and require their employees to arrive at work consistent with their scheduled work hours. VRCBVI has similar expectations that students will consistently be punctual for class and other program activities.

## **I. Student Absences**

1. Students who are going to be absent must contact the front desk, either in person or by phone. Students are expected to leave a voice mail if no one at the front desk answers the call. VRCBVI staff who manage the front desk must be aware of this process.
2. The front desk staff member will notify all VRCBVI staff of the absence.
3. If a student is missing, VRCBVI staff shall immediately notify the student's VRCBVI Case Manager, the Assistant Director for Administration, and the front desk.

## **J. Request for class schedule change**

A request for a change in a student's class schedule may come from the student, the instructor, or both. Reasons for requests could include that the student is not making satisfactory progress in the class, scheduling conflicts, issues between the instructor and student, etc.

1. Prior to any request for a change in class schedules, the instructor and the student will meet to determine if the change is necessary and appropriate (i.e., in the best interests of the student and/or the class). If both agree to the class change, the instructor will proceed with a class change request.

2. All requests for schedule changes are to be emailed by the instructor or provided in person by the student or instructor to the Assistant Director for Instruction. The email must include the effective date of the change, as well as the reason for the requested change. Change requests are due by Wednesday by noon, and the scheduled change will begin the following week.
3. The Assistant Director for Instruction will email approval for the requested schedule change to the instructor(s) within two business days of receipt of the request. The student will be notified of the approval of the request verbally and via email.
4. If there is disagreement regarding the class schedule change, a meeting to include the instructor, the student, and the Assistant Director for Instruction will be scheduled to address the issue. Other VRCBVI management may be included as necessary in order to make a determination as to whether to approve the request.
5. If the class schedule change is requested due to disability specific reasons, such as student requiring more intensive support (e.g., one on one) in order to effectively participate and/or progress in the class, the VRCBVI Case Manager will be notified, and a meeting held to determine the most appropriate course of action for that student. The referring DBVI staff member will be contacted to participate in this meeting.
6. In the situation where an instructor is requesting the class schedule change due to concerns regarding the student's conduct (i.e., frequent absences/tardiness, poor/disruptive participation in class, etc.), the Student Disciplinary Policy must be followed prior to any decision to make a change in class schedule.
7. If the student's request to change their class schedule is denied, the student will be informed of their appeal rights.

## **Student Conduct – Expectations and Responsibilities**

Students participating in services at VRCBVI are subject to the expectations and responsibilities described in the ***VRCBVI Student Handbook***. Much like an employee handbook, these expectations are designed to ensure a training environment in which all students are empowered to achieve their training goals. In the vast majority of circumstances, informal conversations or reminders for those situations where a student may not be fully adhering to expectations quickly addresses the concern. However, in those circumstances where a student's conduct continues to impact their training or others at VRCBVI, the Student Standard of Conduct Policy will be implemented by staff. As noted in the Student Rights section of the manual, students at VRCBVI have the right to request a review of any determination made by VRCBVI staff that affects the provision of their services at VRCBVI and of their appeal rights.



## **Student Standard of Conduct Policy**

VRCBVI's Student Standard of Conduct Policy will be implemented in circumstances where a student's conduct is significantly affecting their participation in training or the participation of others.

1. Prior to initiating any type of intervention, any student conduct concern that arises must first be assessed to clearly understand the nature of the issue and possible remedies to improve the conduct. Informal counseling and guidance is typically the first step in addressing any student conduct issues.
2. Student conduct concerns will be addressed in a timely manner with the student by the staff member directly involved unless the nature of the issue requires other staff involvement.
3. Depending on the nature and severity of the conduct, the student's VRCBVI Case Manager and/or VRCBVI administration must be consulted. The referring DBVI staff member will be contacted immediately and will be provided the opportunity to participate in any discussion by VRCBVI staff regarding the student's conduct. No decision to suspend or terminate the student's program will be made without first consulting with the referring VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher.

## **Medical Information and Student Medical Responsibilities**

Each student will participate in Health Education Orientation provided by the Health Educator and VRCBVI Case Manager during the student's first week at VRCBVI.

1. All VRCBVI students are expected to manage their medical conditions or illnesses independently.
2. Students are expected to make their own arrangements to secure medical care if they become ill while participating in VRCBVI programs, including non-scheduled or urgent medical situations, arranging pharmacy trips for medication, and all other associated errands. The VRCBVI Case Manager is available to assist students with identifying local medical providers and transportation resources upon request by a student.
3. Students are responsible for notifying the VRCBVI Case Manager when they will be absent due to illness or medical treatment. Students are expected to sign out with the front desk or dormitory staff when leaving campus for medical appointments.
4. VRCBVI staff will encourage students to educate themselves about their health insurance benefits, co-pay amounts, prescription benefits, urgent care and

emergency room options, and contact information so they are prepared to handle a medical situation should one arise.

5. Students who do not have a local physician to visit will be made aware of local medical facilities, including urgent care centers and emergency room options. Local options for over-the-counter medications and drug prescriptions also will be made available as needed.

### **Urgent Medical Situations**

Urgent medical situations (situations other than medical emergencies, as described below) and training related injuries that may require staff assistance will be addressed following consultation with the VRCBVI Case Manager and/or an administrator. Urgent medical situations will be handled on an individualized, case-by-case basis. Urgent medical situations are those in which a student requires assistance in determining if the injury or illness requires medical attention through a visit to a doctor or an urgent care or similar facility. Examples of urgent medical situations include, but are not limited to, illnesses that are progressively becoming worse over successive days, an injury that may require stitches or may involve a broken bone, or any other medical situation for which the student may require assistance or consultation. While VRCBVI staff may provide assistance and consultation to the student in these cases, the student shall be responsible for determining if medical attention is required or desired. Staff shall communicate to students that VRCBVI does not have a medical clinic, and that the Health Educator cannot diagnose or treat medical conditions, or dispense medication.

### **Procedures for Handling Student Medical Emergencies**

In the event of a **medical emergency** VRCBVI staff will:

1. Call 911 and render first aid until medical assistance arrives. Staff shall not leave students unattended. Available additional staff shall provide assistance as necessary.
2. During regular work hours (Monday through Friday, 8:15 AM to 5:00 PM), as soon as 911 has been called, the staff who called 911 (or his or her designee) shall notify VRCBVI's Front Desk of the 911 call, so accurate information may be provided to the emergency medical responders upon their arrival. The staff who called 911 or Front Desk staff must also advise the VRCBVI Director, or, in the absence of the Director, an Assistant Director, of the situation. Front Desk staff shall provide the student's emergency medical information to responders.
3. Outside of regular work hours, including weekends, as soon as 911 has been called, the staff who called 911 will notify VRCBVI's Assistant Director for Administration, or VRCBVI's Director, if the Assistant Director for

Administration is not available. Dorm staff will provide the student's emergency medical information to responders.

4. Upon being notified, the Director or Assistant Director(s), as applicable, immediately will advise the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner for Services, and the Deputy Commissioner for Administration of the student's medical emergency. Other VRCBVI staff also will be advised, including the Case Manager, the Health Educator, and dorm staff.
5. VRCBVI's Case Manager will notify the student's relevant emergency contacts as soon as possible and will ensure the referring DBVI staff member is made aware of the student's medical emergency.

### **Handling a Non-Emergency Medical Situation**

In the event of a **non-emergency medical situation** (i.e., when a student reports a medical issue/complains of being sick and may need to seek medical attention at an urgent care facility or the emergency room, but the situation is not such that ambulance transport is advisable), the following procedures, in the order listed, shall be undertaken by staff:

1. Problem-solving steps including:
  - Having an initial discussion with the student to determine whether his or her medical issue is urgent or severe enough to need medical evaluation or attention.
  - Providing the student with local medical and/or pharmacy options if the student is not aware of them.
  - Assisting the student with transportation options. It will be the exception that VRCBVI staff provides transportation for medical appointments, trips to the pharmacy, etc., rather than expected or "the rule." (Staff transportation, through use of a state vehicle when approved by management, may be available Monday through Friday ONLY, and NOT at night or on weekends).
2. Monday through Friday from 8:15 AM to 5:00 PM: Staff member who is made aware of the situation will problem solve with the student, such as asking them how they would handle the situation if they were at home. The student may also be referred to the VRCBVI Case Manager or one of the Assistant Directors for assistance with problem solving if the student appears to require assistance beyond the staff member's ability.
3. Nights and weekends: Staff will call 911 for assistance in the event of a situation in which the severity of the medical situation is unclear (i.e., student

- is unable to make an informed choice regarding seeking medical attention due to significant pain; student appears to be woozy or disoriented, etc.). For non-emergency medical concerns, dormitory staff will engage the student in a conversation about how to handle the situation independently, including transportation options such as taxi or Uber/Lyft, etc. The student will always be encouraged to problem solve the situation with assistance from the dormitory staff member.
4. If student states that he or she does not have the necessary Orientation and Mobility (O & M) skills to safely navigate to a medical appointment or to the pharmacy, staff should encourage the student to take a taxi or use Uber/Lyft or explore with his or her O & M instructor the possibility of making the trip as part of an O & M lesson.
  5. VRCBVI may send a staff member with the student to a medical appointment if the student is too ill to travel independently. The Assistant Director for Administration will make this decision. If the student also requires transportation to the medical appointment, the Assistant Director for Administration or designee will determine whether VRCBVI staff will provide transportation. In all cases, a state car will be used to transport the student.
  6. If the student does not have the funds to pay for a medical visit co-pay, over-the-counter medication, prescription, or transportation, VRCBVI staff will advise the student to contact his or her VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher.

## Medical Restrictions

VRCBVI reserves the right to send a student home when the student cannot fully participate in training because of medical restrictions, when a student's treatment must be provided at home, or when a student requires medical care or supervision that VRCBVI does not provide. Students are expected to comply with any doctor's orders and written prescriptions while at VRCBVI. Students are required to sign the "**VRCBVI General Medical Compliance Policy**" form upon beginning their training at VRCBVI (A parent or legal guardian must sign for students who are under the age of 18).

1. Students diagnosed with contagious medical conditions will be required to return to their home community.
2. VRCBVI Case Manager will report all mandated health conditions to the Virginia Department of Health.
3. Students who are required to return home due to medical conditions will notify the VRCBVI Case Manager and arrange to return home immediately. The

DBVI VRCBVI  
Guidance Document 2024

VRCBVI Case Manager will notify VRCBVI staff and ensure that the referring VR Counselor or the Rehabilitation Teacher is informed.

4. Students who have documented medical restrictions will be excused from class.
5. If a student needs to be placed on light duty or bed rest due to a medical condition for more than one day, VRCBVI administration will decide of whether the student is allowed to remain at VRCBVI or will return home. It is the student's responsibility to obtain the needed documentation from his or her healthcare provider and inform his or her instructors and VRCBVI Case Manager.
6. Students are responsible for arranging with cafeteria staff to obtain their own meals when medical issues prevent them from being present in the cafeteria during scheduled meals. Cafeteria staff will not deliver meals to the dormitory.
7. Students must follow their health provider's treatment recommendation in order to limit the impact on their training program.
8. Following illness or other medical restriction, a student must provide written documentation from his or her treating physician releasing the student to return to participation in VRCBVI programs.

### **Medical situations at night or on a weekend**

1. In the event a student has a **medical emergency** Monday through Friday between 5:00 PM and 8:15 AM or anytime on a weekend (e.g., trouble breathing, head injury, broken bone, unconsciousness, chest pain, seizures, or bleeding that will not stop):
  - a. VRCBVI staff will call 911 and render first aid until medical assistance arrives.
  - b. After calling 911 and as soon as reasonably possible, VRCBVI staff will contact the student's parent(s) to advise them of the student's medical emergency.
  - c. The VRCBVI Director or Assistant Director(s) will immediately advise the DBVI Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner for Services, and the Deputy Commissioner for Administration of the student's medical emergency. Other VRCBVI staff will also be advised, including the Case Manager, the Health Educator, and Dorm staff.
2. In the event of a **non-emergency medical situation** (i.e., when a student might need to go to an urgent care facility or the emergency room, but the situation is not such that ambulance transport is necessary, see above), the following procedures will be undertaken by staff:

DBVI VRCBVI  
Guidance Document 2024

- a. Staff will contact the VRCBVI staff member who is “on call” for the week. The on-call list, along with contact information, will be provided to all staff at the beginning of the LIFE and LEAP programs.
  - b. If the on-call staff member is not available, staff will leave a voicemail, and then call the Assistant Director for Administration, the Assistant Director for Instruction, or the Director. If none of the VRCBVI administrators is available, staff will call the DBVI Deputy Commissioner for Services or the Commissioner.
3. The on call staff person will assess the situation to include:
- a. If medical care is required, the on call staff person will contact the student’s parent(s) to determine what actions the parent(s) want initiated.
  - b. If the parent(s) wish for the child to receive medical attention, the parent(s) will be asked to come take their child for treatment.
  - c. If the parent(s) are not able to come to VRCBVI to transport the student to urgent care or the emergency room, a staff member will transport the student to the medical facility specified by the parent(s). The staff person shall take the parent’s signed consent for medical treatment, the student’s photo identification card, and insurance card to the specified medical facility. In all instances, students will be transported in a state vehicle.
  - d. The staff member is responsible for staying with the student during the medical visit, and returning the student to VRCBVI afterward.
  - e. Once the student and staff person are back at VRCBVI, the staff person is responsible for updating the parent(s).
  - f. The staff person will also brief dormitory staff on any required follow-up.
  - g. The staff person will complete an incident report and place a copy in the student’s file. The staff person will email the incident report to their supervisor. The Assistant Director will prepare a service note in AWARE describing the incident and notify the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.
  - h. The on call staff person will follow up the next day to ensure the well-being of the student.
  - i. Students placed on activity restriction will be allowed to rest and recuperate in either the health education classroom or their dormitory room. The VRCBVI Case Manager, Health Educator, or a member of VRCBVI management will be responsible for checking on the student throughout the day, including delivering meals to the student if he or she cannot go to the cafeteria, and for contacting the student’s parent(s) as needed.

## **Chapter 4 Residential**

VRCBVI is committed to providing residential students with a clean, safe, and secure training environment. All students residing on campus are responsible for ensuring health and safety standards are met so that no students experience undue impact on their participation in training at VRCBVI. Students are expected to meet established room inspection requirements and standards for appropriate use of common areas.

### **A. Residential Overview**

#### **Dormitory Living**

Living in the dormitory provides students with the opportunity to connect with their peers and put into practice the skills they have learned in the VRCBVI programs. Exposure to this style of living supports the student's continued development of independence and skills for successful employment.

1. Students must be full time participants in classes in order to reside in the dorm (Monday through Friday; 8:15 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.).
2. Students live in suites, which are attached to a bathroom shared with one suitemate; VRCBVI administration assigns rooms and suitemates.
3. VRCBVI staff inspect dorm rooms weekly.
4. Residential students are expected to take care of personal and medical needs without assistance.

### **B. Independent Living Program**

The Independent Living ("IL") program provides students with the opportunity to reside in VRCBVI's IL efficiency apartments in a comprehensive program lasting up to twelve weeks. Students are expected to apply learned nonvisual and/or low vision skills and techniques in a variety of situations in the three-phase IL program. VRCBVI's Personal and Home Management ("PHM") Department oversees the IL program. Students participating in the program will maintain frequent communications with these instructors regarding any matters pertaining to the program. The PHM Department will customize the program on a case-by-case basis to accomplish a student's individualized VRCBVI goals.

### **C. Residential Living**

#### **Transportation to and from VRCBVI**

Students are expected to make their own arrangements for transportation to and from the VRCBVI campus. The student will discuss transportation needs with their VR Counselor and/or Rehabilitation Teacher as soon as possible after acceptance to VRCBVI once an entrance date has been scheduled. Financial support for transportation to and from VRCBVI may be available through the VR Counselor or the Rehabilitation Teacher.

## **Preparation for Participation in Services at VRCBVI**

### **Required Items to Bring**

Students will receive a welcome packet that includes a list of items they will need while participating in programs at VRCBVI. The referring VR Counselor and/or the Rehabilitation Teacher will ensure the student has reviewed the list prior to their entry date and has accumulated the necessary items. Additionally, the student may need other items not listed below given his or her specific situation. The student or the referring DBVI staff member must contact the assigned VRCBVI Case Manager with any questions regarding items the student wishes to bring to VRCBVI that are not on the required items list.

### **Prohibited items at VRCBVI**

Without exception, students are prohibited from bringing the following items onto the VRCBVI campus:

1. Alcoholic beverages or drugs
2. Guns, knives, or other dangerous weapons
3. Pets
4. Heaters or appliances with an exposed heating element

## **D. VRCBVI Orientation to Dormitory**

**New Student Orientation (VRCBVI Case Manager):** Students will be provided a campus orientation by their VRCBVI Case Manager within 24 hours of the student's arrival at VRCBVI. The VRCBVI Case Manager will ensure all releases and waivers have been filled out and signed by the student, will ensure the students have a full understanding of confidentiality policies, and will explain the Case Manager's role, as well as the role of other VRCBVI staff. The VRCBVI Case Manager will provide an orientation to the campus buildings and services, reviewing policies regarding safety, visitors, class schedules, etc. The VRCBVI Student Handbook will be reviewed, and any questions or concerns addressed. The student will sign the Student Handbook Review form acknowledging receipt and review of the Handbook.

**New Student Orientation (Dormitory Staff):** Dormitory staff will provide new students with an orientation to the dormitory and associated facilities (cafeteria, laundry room,



etc.) upon their arrival at VRCBVI. Dormitory staff will ensure that all new students are provided with keycards/keys in order to access their suite, instructions regarding basic dormitory functions, dormitory schedules, safety and security information (including key staff contact information, visitor policies, etc.), and an orientation to campus facilities the student may need to access while receiving services at VRCBVI. The dormitory staff shall ensure that students fully understand VRCBVI's expectations regarding maintaining appropriate health and safety standards in the dormitory.

## **E. Residential Life and Responsibilities**

Students are expected to adhere to all policies and procedures as outlined in the VRCBVI Student Handbook throughout the student's participation in training. While at VRCBVI, the residential student is using the dormitory as both a home and as an integral part of Personal and Home Management (PHM) training. Maintaining a clean, healthy, and safe dormitory environment, with students adhering to the dormitory rules and regulations, is necessary for all students to enjoy the full benefit of VRCBVI programs. Dormitory room inspections will be conducted weekly.

## **F. Residential Life and Responsibilities – Youth and Special Programming**

VRCBVI regularly offers targeted programming for youth and others served by DBVI. Residential policies and procedures for these programs are communicated to all students prior to attending.

### **LIFE Program (Learning Independence, Feeling Empowered)**

Students participating in the LIFE program will be provided with an orientation to VRCBVI and expectations for participating in the program (LIFE Rules of the Road). The student will sign the form acknowledging that the rules have been reviewed with them, and the student's parent or guardian will sign the form if the student is under 18 years of age.

### **LEAP (Learning Excellence in Academics Program)**

Students participating in LEAP will be provided with an orientation to VRCBVI and expectations for participating in the program (LEAP Rules of the Road). The student will sign the form acknowledging the rules have been reviewed with them, and the student's parent or guardian will sign the form if the student is under 18 years of age.

## **G. Role and Responsibilities - Dormitory Staff**

The dormitory staff have primary oversight responsibility for VRCBVI students who are residing in the dormitory during non-instructional hours, providing regular safety and

security checks, monitoring ingress and egress of students, and ensuring compliance with dormitory policies and procedures. The dormitory staff are responsible for ensuring a welcoming, safe, and comfortable living environment that will allow VRCBVI students to utilize and enhance their independent living skills. Dormitory staff also provide supervision and supplementary instruction in skills of blindness for students in the dormitory during non-instructional hours.

### **Dormitory Staff Responsibilities**

1. Conduct new student orientations utilizing the Dormitory New Student Orientation Checklist.
2. Complete the student health and medical information form for each new student, and save the document on the K drive.
3. Conduct dormitory room inspections on a scheduled basis. Complete dormitory room inspection checklist.
4. Supervise and reinforce Center instruction in skills of blindness during non-instructional hours.
5. Ensure students comply with VRCBVI policies, procedures, rules, and regulations.
6. Assist students with assignments.
7. Promote independent travel skills and provide instructional support in the development of independent living skills.
8. Ensure safety and security of the dormitory.
9. Provide support regarding student health concerns, medical complications, or emergencies.
10. Write and submit daily dormitory reports to appropriate staff, reporting all significant information and observations.

### **Dormitory Room inspections**

Dormitory rooms will be inspected on a scheduled basis by VRCBVI staff, utilizing the Dormitory Inspection Checklist. The staff member conducting the inspection shall:

1. Inspect the dormitory room with the student present if possible in order to point out any areas of deficiencies during the inspection. If the student is unable to be present during the inspection, the student is responsible for following up with the dormitory staff to ascertain the results of the inspection.
2. If the student is present for the inspection, he or she will be informed of the results at the time of the inspection.
3. The completed ***Dormitory Inspection Checklist*** will be sent to the Assistant Director of Administration.
4. The staff member will provide any necessary training or instruction (or re-instruction) as appropriate. The staff member will communicate the student's training needs to the Assistant Director of Administration.

5. Within 24-48 hours, the staff member shall re-inspect the rooms of students who did not pass inspection, and will communicate the results of those re-inspections to the Assistant Director of Administration.

## **H. Dormitory Computer Access and Use Policy**

Students must sign ***VRCBVI's Internet User Agreement form*** and be approved by a computer instructor before they are authorized to use the dorm computers.

Computer privileges for students may be revoked at any time if it is determined that, while they used the dormitory computer, any settings were changed. Additionally, if it is determined that a student downloaded illegal or pornographic materials, their privileges will be terminated immediately, and further disciplinary action may result.

### **I. Dormitory Visitors**

Visitors are allowed on campus Monday through Friday from 5:00 PM to 10:00 PM, and Saturday and Sunday from 12:00 pm to 10:00 pm. All outside visitors are required to check in at the dormitory supervisor's office immediately upon entering campus where they will be given a visitor's badge. Visitors are required to wear the visitor's badge at all times while on the VRCBVI campus.

## **J. Students Leaving the VRCBVI Campus**

Students residing on the VRCBVI campus are required to sign out when leaving the campus and sign in upon their return.

When leaving and returning to campus, students must sign out and sign in 24 hours a day. Between 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM students are to sign on/off campus at the front desk of the Administrative Activities building. Between 5:00 PM and 8:00 AM and on weekends, students sign on/off campus with the Dormitory Supervisors.

Students departing from VRCBVI overnight are required to turn in their VRCBVI photo ID keycard at the Administrative Activities building front desk or the Dormitory Supervisor's Office prior to leaving campus.

## Chapter 5 Campus Security and Facility Use

### A. Security of the Azalea Avenue Complex (AAC)

DBVI provides campus security for the Azalea Avenue Complex (AAC), which includes VRCBVI, 24 hours per day, seven days per week. The DBVI Facilities Manager is responsible for AAC security. Security incidents or concerns shall be reported to the Facilities Manager. VRCBVI staff will report any concerns to their immediate supervisor or to VRCBVI Administration. Students must report any concerns to any VRCBVI staff member. Dormitory staff shall report any security incidents that occur between the hours of 5 p.m. and 8:15 a.m. to the Facilities Manager, as well as VRCBVI Administrative staff. In the event of an emergency, VRCBVI staff will contact local law enforcement as appropriate.

#### Possession of Firearms on campus

##### [\(Per 1VAC30-105-40. Possession of Firearms Prohibited\)](#)

Possession or carrying of any concealed firearm by any person is prohibited in state offices. Entry into a state office in violation of this prohibition is expressly forbidden. This prohibition does not apply to law-enforcement officers, authorized security personnel, or military personnel when such individuals are authorized to carry a firearm in accordance with their duties and when they are carrying the firearm within that authority. It also does not apply to state employees where the employee's position requires carrying a concealed firearm. Additionally, Commonwealth of Virginia Executive Order (Number 50: 2015) prohibits open carry of firearms on the campus of VRCBVI.

#### Culture of Safe and Secure Campus Life

VRCBVI supports a safe and secure culture for students and staff that is free from discrimination, harassment, sexual or other assault or abuse, and other criminal activity.

1. Criminal activity, including drug possession or use, harassment, and sexual or other assault or abuse, will not be tolerated by the DBVI administration. Any such incidents will be reported to the Henrico County or State Police as required by local, state, or federal law.
2. Students who participate in illegal activity will be barred from the VRCBVI campus and their training at VRCBVI will be terminated.
3. Students who have knowledge of or who experience incidences of harassment, sexual or other types of assault, or other criminal activity are expected to alert VRCBVI administration and the Henrico County Police of such information.

4. Student's personal information will be protected within the confines of local, state, and federal law and regulations.

## **Campus Safety and Security**

The safety of students and the security of the campus community are of vital concern to the VRCBVI administration. In an effort to maintain a safe and secure environment, DBVI employs security officers who are on campus 24 hours per day.

Security measures on the VRCBVI campus include use and monitoring of video cameras that are strategically placed around the campus. Video cameras are not placed in private areas such as bathrooms, dorm rooms, or locker rooms.

Students are encouraged to keep their dorm room doors closed and locked when they are not in their rooms.

Students must not allow unidentified individuals into their rooms or into any campus buildings at any time for any reason.

Students **are not** allowed to have the following items in their dorm rooms or on campus at any time for any reason:

- firearms (real or look-alike)
- ammunition (live or spent)
- dangerous weapons or any item that can be used as a weapon.
- knives (other than for the purpose of cooking)
- explosives or fireworks
- handcuffs or other restraining devices
- candles, incense, or flammable fuels
- pornographic materials shared or displayed in plain sight
- gang or drug paraphernalia
- alcohol
- unauthorized prescription drugs
- drugs or look-alike drug substances

Students who are in possession of prohibited items are subject to all county, state, and federal laws and regulations, including interaction with law enforcement as needed. Possession of prohibited items may result in termination of training at VRCBVI.

## **Identification**

1. VRCBVI staff and students in VRCBVI training programs will be provided with easy to recognize photo identification keycards and lanyards.

2. Students and staff will wear their photo ID keycard at all times while on campus participating in VRCBVI training, programs, and activities. For ease of identification and safety, students are requested to ensure that their IDs are visible at all times.
3. VRCBVI staff, students, and visitors shall not obscure themselves in any way that prevents visual identification. Sleep shades used for training are not considered masks.

## **B. Emergency Action Plan and Drills**

### **Fire Drill Action Plan**

1. VRCBVI conducts emergency and fire drills on a routine basis. Students will be provided with information about how to respond during their orientation to VRCBVI. Flashing lights are mounted within dorm rooms where deaf and hard of hearing students are residing.
2. Students and staff are required to proceed directly to secure areas when emergency or fire drills occur. Staff will physically check classrooms, bathrooms, dormitory rooms, etc., to ensure all students have evacuated.
3. Students and staff will remain in the secure area until informed by VRCBVI administration that is safe to return to the VRCBVI facilities. Staff will take roll of the students in their secure area to ensure all students and staff are accounted for.

### **Tornado Drill and Emergency Procedures**

1. During a tornado warning or drill, an air horn will sound.
2. Students and staff will gather in each building's designated safe areas.

### **Inclement Weather**

In the event of inclement weather, the Governor's office will make the decision to close state offices in the Richmond area, including VRCBVI. The VRCBVI Director will monitor the ***DHRM website*** and will work with VRCBVI Assistant Directors to notify staff of agency closings or delayed openings. Since VRCBVI is a residential program, there are students on campus most of the year 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The VRCBVI Director, in consultation with the Deputy Commissioner for Services or the DBVI Commissioner, is responsible for closing decisions after 5 p.m., on weekends, or on state holidays when the Center is open.

If VRCBVI is closed due to inclement weather, all VRCBVI classes are cancelled. Dormitory staff and cafeteria staff will be responsible for maintaining necessary staffing of VRCBVI during this period.

### **C. VRCBVI Campus Building Use Policy**

Individuals who desire to use one of VRCBVI's meeting/conference rooms (North Conference Room, Assembly Room, Braille Library) will contact the Front Desk at (804) 371-3151 to check availability and make a reservation. Email inquiries and requests for reservations can be made to the VRCBVI Executive Secretary or the designated administrative support staff. DBVI will provide individuals who receive approval to use one of VRCBVI's meeting spaces with policies and procedures pertaining to use of the facility.

#### **Swimming Pool**

Swimwear is appropriate to wear only in the swimming pool area. Staff and students may not wear swimwear outside of the swimming pool area or on the walkways without a cover up. When sunbathing, students will wear a cover up traveling to and from the area. Locker rooms are available for students to change.

#### **Fitness / Weight Room**

1. T-shirts with sleeves are required.
2. Students may not wear workout clothing that shows the midriff or has slits down the side.
3. Students must wear shorts, sweatpants, or other workout pants that are at least mid-thigh long. No short shorts allowed.

#### **Gymnasium**

In addition to typical gymnasium activities, meetings and other special events are held here. Food or drinks are not allowed in the gym.

1. Students must dress appropriately for the activity in which they plan to participate, whether it is bowling, pool, goalball, or any other recreational activity. Midriffs must be covered, undergarments must not be showing, and pants must be at least mid-thigh length.
2. Students may play portable stereos/CD players on the back patio as long as the volume is reasonable and the content (profanity, distasteful language) does not offend or annoy other students, VRCBVI staff, or visitors.
3. Students must use headphones with phones and CD/DVD players when inside the VRCBVI buildings.

### **D. Service Animals/Dog Guides**

Per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a service animal (including dog guides) is defined as any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability.

Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA. Under Title II and III of the ADA, service animals are limited to dogs. VRCBVI does not permit any animals other than dogs as service animals for students participating in services at VRCBVI.

Note: Revised ADA regulations have a provision about miniature horses that have been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Entities covered by the ADA must modify their policies to permit miniature horses where reasonable. However, the regulations set out four assessment factors to assist entities in determining whether miniature horses can be accommodated in their facility. The assessment factors are (1) whether the miniature horse is housebroken; (2) whether the miniature horse is under the owner's control; (3) whether the facility can accommodate the miniature horse's type, size, and weight; and (4) whether the miniature horse's presence will not compromise legitimate safety requirements necessary for safe operation of the facility. VRCBVI is not equipped to accommodate a miniature horse per the assessment factors above and so they are not permitted as a service animal.

### **Owner/Handler Responsibilities**

The student who requires a service animal while receiving services at VRCBVI assumes responsibility for the care and supervision of his or her service animal. If a service animal behaves in an unacceptable way and the student does not control the animal, VRCBVI may make the determination that the animal is no longer permitted. Examples of lack of control of the animal include, but are not limited to, uncontrolled barking, jumping on other people, or running away from the student. Additionally:

1. The dog must be housebroken.
2. The student is responsible for the care and supervision of the dog, including cleaning up after the dog.
3. The animal must be vaccinated in accordance with state and local laws.

Service animals other than dog guides may be permitted for students on a case-by-case basis (as determined by the VRCBVI Director) under the following conditions:



1. The animal is required to accommodate the student's disability. Documentation from a medical doctor or treating therapist or mental health practitioner that there is a disability related need for the service animal is required.
2. The animal has been trained to provide the necessary supports and services to allow the student to effectively participate in services at VRCBVI.

## Chapter 6 VRCBVI Programs and Services

VRCBVI programs and services integrate independence skills development with marketable, relevant employment skills, in order to ensure that individuals develop their maximum desired employment capabilities; to prepare them for entry into or to maintain their current role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. The VRCBVI training curriculum in all instructional areas will include employability skill development.

### Overview

VRCBVI is committed to creating an environment that is conducive to each student's growth, including the acquisition of skills, which will lead to greater employment opportunities and independence in everyday life. The training programs at VRCBVI are designed to meet the specific needs of the student. Transition students can attend the LIFE program (Learning Independence, Feeling Empowered) and LEAP (Learning Excellence in Academics Program), both of which are pre-employment transition services programs (Pre-ETS). VRCBVI also offers services to individuals age 55 and older who are blind and vision impaired (Senior Retreat). In addition to these programs, VRCBVI regularly offers short-term programs to meet the current needs of the individuals DBVI serves.

VRCBVI offers a core curriculum, which is required for all full-time residential students as described in this guidance document.

The student's training team will work with the student to determine training strategies, nonvisual or visual, that will work best to meet the individual needs of the student. VRCBVI utilizes a Core Classes and Content spreadsheet which outlines the core competencies for each area of VRCBVI training and the average number of hours it would typically take to reach those competencies.

Full time students are expected to participate in all core classes (Orientation and Mobility, Personal and Home Management, Braille, Keyboarding/Computer, and Access Technology). Other classes, such as Health Education, and Adult Basic Education are taken only as its determined necessary (following the evaluation period).

Following an evaluation period, if it is determined the student does not require continuing with a specific class, other optional classes may be taken. A full-time residential student is required to take classes for 40 hours per week (8:15 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.). Full-time commuter students are required to take 25 hours or more, while part-time students take classes for 24 or less hours per week.

### Training Approaches

VRCBVI provides a comprehensive adjustment to blindness training program through two training approaches: an approach using whatever residual vision the student has

and a nonvisual approach. DBVI policy requires that students be given the opportunity, through an informed choice process and in consultation with VRCBVI staff, to determine which training approach (or a combination of both) will best meet their needs. Students are not required to choose only one method or the other; a student may wish to pursue training in some training areas using low vision aids and strategies while in another choose the nonvisual approach. Another example would be a student who chooses to use sleep shades while in classes, but not use them outside of training.

Once an applicant has been accepted to VRCBVI, the prospective student is given the opportunity to determine the training approach they wish to utilize while participating in training at VRCBVI. The student may make the decision during the pre-admission conference phone call (prior to beginning training at VRCBVI), may defer the decision until they begin training, or may change their training approach once training has begun. Training will be initiated using the visual approach for students who are undecided and have usable vision. The referring VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher will be an active participant in the decision, but with the understanding that the decision rests with the student to the extent that safety is not a concern.

### **Role of VRCBVI Staff in the Informed Choice Process**

The VRCBVI student must be given appropriate and necessary information from which to make an informed choice as to the training approach that best serves him or her. At the point of the pre-admission conference call, staff's information will be limited to referral information. VRCBVI staff may not have enough information to provide effective guidance and counseling for students who may have some usable vision as to the most appropriate training approach. However, as the VRCBVI instructors begin to work with the students in training, particularly during the initial evaluation period, they will be able to offer recommendations that are more specific.

Staff counsel regarding training approach must always start with the student's choice. However, two factors that must be considered in any recommendations to the student are:

1. The ability of the student to effectively use their residual vision in order to acquire the basic skills and competencies needed in each training area; and;
2. Any student safety concerns VRCBVI staff identify while providing training.

VRCBVI instructors who assess that a student is not demonstrating progress in a particular class may recommend that the student utilize nonvisual training or a combination of both nonvisual and visual training in order to maximize skill development. While the student retains the right to choose their training approach, it is the responsibility of VRCBVI staff to provide the student with information based on their training, education, and direct experience with the student such that the student may make the best choice for themselves.

In some circumstances, an instructor may observe that the student's choice of training approach raises safety concerns. For example, a student in Orientation and Mobility may choose visual training, but the instructor observes that the individual cannot safely cross the street using their vision. A student in Personal and Home Management who struggles with the use of an oven and stove burners may find nonvisual approaches allow them to learn techniques to safely utilize these appliances. In these situations, the instructor must consult with the Assistant Director for Instruction and the VRCBVI Director in order to inform them of their concerns. If there is consensus that continuing with the student's chosen instructional approach creates a safety risk, the student's VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher must be informed of VRCBVI's concerns. A meeting with the student, VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher, and VRCBVI staff (Director, Assistant Director for Instruction, instructor(s)) will be held to determine what training approach will be offered to the student given the safety concerns. VRCBVI may determine that they are unable to serve students who are unwilling to agree to a training approach that reduces or eliminates VRCBVI's safety concerns.

**Guidance:** *VRCBVI staff must honor the student's choice regarding a training approach. However, there are situations where VRCBVI staff have assessed that the student's choice may not best meet their needs. In situations where the student is not progressing using the training approach they have chosen, or where there are safety concerns, VRCBVI staff have an obligation to provide guidance and counseling to assist the student in identifying other options that will allow them to be more successful and safe in their training. In addition, some students, particularly transition-aged students, may have no experience from which to make an informed choice. Providing the student with opportunities to experience training through nonvisual and visual approaches empowers the student to appropriately identify the approaches that work best for them. However, in no situation will VRCBVI establish requirements (either explicitly or implicitly) that require students to utilize a particular training approach while receiving services at VRCBVI.*

## **A. VRCBVI Training Objectives**

1. Integrate an employment focus into all skill development, providing students with opportunities to apply those skills while in training.
2. Maximize skills to meet changing workplace needs, ensuring skills taught at VRCBVI align with and are relevant to workforce needs and opportunities.
3. Provide students with employment experience and exposure.
4. Build business input into the design and delivery of employment skills.

## **B. Access Technology and Other Necessary Devices for Training**

VRCBVI is not responsible for purchasing or providing any necessary low vision aids, access technology, or other devices that the student requires in order to effectively participate in training at VRCBVI. As such, it is imperative that the VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher ensures any necessary assessments or evaluations are

completed, the technology, aid, or device is purchased, and the student has been provided adequate training prior to beginning training. However, in some circumstances an instructor may determine after the student is already participating in training that the student requires specific access technology devices or low vision aids to participate in VRCBVI's classes. Prior to any recommendation for the purchase of a device, an assessment must be completed, either by the appropriate VRCBVI instructor or through other DBVI technology staff.

Upon completion of the assessment, a recommendation (either by the instructor or by DBVI technology staff) will be made to the VRCBVI Case Manager. The VRCBVI Case Manager will review the recommendation and communicate the recommendation to the VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher who will make a determination as to whether or not the device is necessary to support the individual's vocational goal. They will make any necessary amendments to the student's IPE and will arrange to purchase the device for the student.

### **C. Short-Term Employment Readiness Training**

VRCBVI will periodically schedule short-term employment readiness training aimed at enhancing the student's employment related skills. Training will address career readiness and job-seeking skills, including job interviews and job applications, and participants will have the opportunity to practice those skills through participation in employer events. Specific admission requirements for these programs will be determined by VRCBVI management and staff and communicated to the Regional Offices. In general, the programs target individuals who are open to Vocational Rehabilitation services, are adults (18 years or older), are independent in their personal care, medical care, and medication management, and are actively seeking employment (or will be in the near future).

Following completion of the employment readiness program, VRCBVI staff will develop a written evaluation of their assigned students' participation in the program, which will be provided to the referring VR Counselor.

### **D. Employment Readiness Training**

Assisting students with becoming employed in competitive, integrated work settings is an essential component of training at VRCBVI. Employability related skills are integrated into all classes at VRCBVI. For example, while a possible goal of computer training is to learn MS Office Suite, email, and internet, using the class for resume development, online applications, and other work related documents to enhance job-seeking skills is also an important part of the programming. As schedule permits, VRCBVI staff participates in the development and coordination of individualized job readiness and employability development services. Services may include career exploration and counseling, job seeking skills, and other related pre-employment and employability skills, such as the soft skills required to be successful at work.

## **VRCBVI Case Management Services**

Each student is assigned a VRCBVI Case Manager while in training at VRCBVI. The VRCBVI Case Manager provides initial orientation via a pre-admission conference call with the student and Rehabilitation Teacher/VR Counselor. The VRCBVI Case Manager also provides the student with an orientation on their first day of training at VRCBVI. The VRCBVI Case Manager explains and clarifies student, field, and VRCBVI expectations for training, as well as program policies and expectations. Additional functions of the Case Manager include, but are not limited to, facilitating communication between VRCBVI staff, field staff, and the student by providing regular progress updates, scheduling and conducting evaluation, progress, and final staffings, and being available to answer questions and address training concerns of the student, VRCBVI staff, or field staff. The VRCBVI Case Manager assists with securing any resources or services needed for participation in VRCBVI training, and may provide supportive individual counseling as needed. The VRCBVI Case Manager may also assist in coordinating community based counseling when long term mental health needs arise that must be addressed in order to promote the student's ability to complete training successfully.

### **E. VRCBVI Low Vision Services**

VRCBVI provides limited case management and coordination support services for students requiring DBVI low vision services. VRCBVI low vision case management support services may include:

1. Functional visual acuity assessment by the VRCBVI Low Vision Case Manager;
2. Case management support of the student participating in a low vision examination through DBVI Low Vision Services while at VRCBVI;
3. Access to low vision aids (if available) for assessment/trial use while in training at VRCBVI;
4. Follow-up case management to determine usefulness of low vision aids.

### **F. VRCBVI Individualized Plans, Staffings, and Reports**

**Purpose:** To present feedback and training recommendations.

#### **VRCBVI Individualized Evaluation and Training Plans**

VRCBVI utilizes the VRCBVI Individualized Plan form throughout the student's training. The form is an Evaluation Plan initially and then is updated once the evaluation phase has been completed and becomes the student's Training Plan.

VRCBVI's Case Manager is charged with the development of each student's Individualized Plans (Evaluation and Training). The plans are developed by the VRCBVI

Case Manager with the student's active participation, as well as participation by the referring Rehabilitation Teacher or VR Counselor. The plans include the student's vocational goal (per their IPE) and the student's goals for each of the training areas the student will be participating in while at VRCBVI. The plans must be signed by both the VRCBVI Case Manager and the student (or student's representative, as appropriate). The signed plans will be placed in the student's VRCBVI file. A copy of the plans will be provided to the student, the referring VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher, and the appropriate VRCBVI instructors.

### **VRCBVI Evaluation Staffing/Update of Individualized Plan**

At the completion of the evaluation period, a staffing is held with the student, instructors, the VRCBVI Case Manager, and the referring DBVI staff member. Other relevant VRCBVI staff, such as the Health Educator, will participate in the staffing as appropriate. The VRCBVI Case Manager is responsible for leading the staffing process, including communicating the staffing schedule in advance. The results of the evaluation are reviewed with the student, and the Individualized Plan (Evaluation) is amended to become the student's Individualized Plan (Training). The Individualized Plan (Training) is reviewed with the student by VRCBVI Case Manager and must be signed and dated by both. The student will be provided with a copy of the plan, as well as the referring VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher, and VRCBVI instructors. .

### **Report Documentation Requirements**

A student's performance is documented throughout his or her training at VRCBVI by the instructors. Each student will have an evaluation report and a final report. The instructors will document for each student with whom they work an evaluation of the student's performance level and specific recommendations for each training area, including training goals. The reports will also include behavioral observations, such as soft skills strengths and challenges, job readiness skills, punctuality and attendance, etc. The report is based on information provided by the instructors.

The reports identify specific performance level goals for each class area. The reports will include the student's performance level as assessed initially by the instructor (performance entry level), and must include the instructor's evaluation of current performance level and a performance goal level. Performance levels reflect the degree of independence or supports required in meeting core competencies for each class. The performance levels are:

- 1 = Unable to Perform
- 2 = With Assistance (Physical)
- 3 = With Supervision & Assistance
- 4 = With Supervision (Verbal)
- 5 = Independently without prompts

## **G. Training Progress (Staffings)**

**Purpose:** To present ongoing feedback regarding student's progress toward training goals and additional training recommendations, if any.

VRCBVI Instructors, the VRCBVI Case Manager, and other VRCBVI staff as necessary will provide students with ongoing constructive feedback throughout the time they are in training. This will ensure that both the student and the referring DBVI staff member are formally apprised of the student's progress in training. VRCBVI will hold staffings every four to six weeks for each student to review the progress the student is making on the goals identified from the Individualized Plan (Training). The VRCBVI Case Manager is responsible for monitoring and coordinating the staffing process for all students so that each student is staffed within the identified time frames. The VRCBVI Case Manager must provide written notice of staffings in a timely manner prior to the staffing date.

The VRCBVI Case Manager will assume responsibility for overseeing the staffing process. The staffing will include the VRCBVI Case Manager and the student; the VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher will participate to the extent feasible. Other relevant VRCBVI staff, such as the Health Educator or the Assistant Director for Instruction, may participate as required. The student's Individualized Plan (Training) will be reviewed and amended based on the results of the staffing. Both the student and the VRCBVI Case Manager will sign and date the amended training plan.

If there are any specific areas of concern from the staffing (e.g., behavioral concerns, significant lack of progress, etc.), the VRCBVI Case Manager will contact the referring DBVI staff member. A specific plan of action will be developed in consultation with the student, instructors, VRCBVI Case Manager, and the VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher such that the student is able to continue their training and move toward a successful outcome. Time sensitive areas of concern (e.g., alcohol or substance abuse concerns, student stops attending classes, etc.) will be communicated to VRCBVI management and to the referring DBVI staff member as soon as possible.

## **H. Completion of Training Program at VRCBVI**

VRCBVI's objective for training is to ensure to the extent practicable that students receive the necessary training and instruction to meet their training goals. The student's progress is continuously monitored, with regular progress reviews in all areas of instruction.

A final staffing is conducted at the completion of the student's training at VRCBVI. The determination of training completion is individualized, with input from the student, student's instructors, the VRCBVI Case Manager, the referring DBVI staff member, and other VRCBVI staff. Considerations include the degree to which the student has essentially met their performance goals in each area of training, or the degree to which the student has maximized their ability to benefit from further training at VRCBVI.



The VRCBVI Case Manager is responsible for coordinating and facilitating the final staffing. The staffing will be held prior to the student leaving VRCBVI or will be held via telephone if the student has already left VRCBVI. Participants in the staffing will include the referring VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher, the student, the VRCBVI Case Manager, the student's instructors, and other relevant VRCBVI staff as necessary. The staffing will summarize the student's performance at VRCBVI for each of the training areas, note performance levels achieved, and make recommendations for the student's next steps as they leave VRCBVI. Recommendations are to be made in the context of the student's goals – participating in post-secondary education or training, increasing independent living skills, pursuing or returning to employment, etc. These recommendations become the basis for the "Center to Field Action Plan" for each student, which contains a set of individualized recommendations for the student to continue to build on once they leave VRCBVI.

## **I. VRCBVI Final Report**

Within 30 days of the student's completion of training at VRCBVI a VRCBVI Final Report is developed. Instructor reports are due to the VRCBVI Case Manager within seven days of the student's departure. The final report is sent to the referring DBVI VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher to be reviewed by them with the student. The report must include:

1. An evaluation of the student's performance in each of the classes;
2. The number of hours of instruction in each area;
3. The performance level that the student attained as compared to the planned performance goal level, and;
4. Specific recommendations for the student regarding continued work to reinforce or maintain acquired skills and/or continue to improve on the areas in which instruction was provided ("Center to Field Action Plan").

### **Center to Field Action Plan: Transitioning from VRCBVI to Home**

In addition to the VRCBVI Final Report, VRCBVI staff collaborate on developing a Center to Field Action Plan, which is sent to the referring DBVI staff member and the student. This plan identifies for each area of instruction the specific next steps/homework for the student. It is intended to provide a specific "roadmap" for the student and the referring DBVI staff member to follow once the student has completed training at VRCBVI. Next steps/homework may include:

1. Specific activities the student should engage in to solidify and enhance skills levels;
2. Health related activities and other behaviors the student should engage in, and;
3. Employment readiness and development activities in which the student should consider participating.

Following discussion with the student, staff will prepare the “Center to Field Action Plan.” The completed plan will ideally be reviewed with the student prior to them leaving VRCBVI. However, if this is not feasible, the plan will be emailed to the student. The referring VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher will review the “Center to Field Action Plan” with the student upon their return from VRCBVI.

## **J. VRCBVI Training Program Criteria for Completion of Training Program**

VRCBVI’s goals are to build each student’s skill proficiency, promote independence, and develop self-confidence. Participation in training also assists in the development of the student’s critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they develop the necessary tools and skillsets. To this end, VRCBVI staff, in consultation with the student, develops an individualized training plan. Throughout VRCBVI training, the student is working on established performance goals, with regular progress reviews conducted with the instructors and VRCBVI Case Manager. Establishing a time frame for the completion of the student’s program is an essential part of the student’s training plan.

As performance goals are established, there must be discussion with the student regarding completion of the program. The training plan must be tailored to each student’s strengths, needs, and training goals, with realistic expectations for timeframes and progress towards those goals. A targeted completion date or timeframe for the student helps to establish clear expectations for both the student and the instructors, with the understanding that both training goals and completion dates may be modified, as needed.

Determining when a student has completed training at VRCBVI involves many factors; including, but not limited to: the student’s progress toward reaching his or her goals, the number of hours in training, student’s participation in training, student’s skill development, attainment of performance goals, and ultimately successful completion of training. While every student may not achieve all of the goals he or she established when beginning training at VRCBVI, there is nevertheless significant benefit achieved throughout the training program. For example, a student who may not have fully mastered independent use of public transportation while at VRCBVI has likely achieved significant milestones in their quest for independence. Training at the Center is not the end; it is the beginning foundation for the student to build on through a life-long learning process.

VRCBVI has established core standards for training hours as a guideline to be considered in the context of the student’s performance. These standards are not intended to be a hard goal but are rather a benchmark to be considered among many other factors in the context of the student’s performance. No student should have their training program ended simply because they failed to achieve a certain competency level within a prescribed number of hours. Instead, the student is given every opportunity to continue in the class as long as identified progress is being made.

VRCBVI instructors and management will use the factors below as a tool to assist in planning for the completion of the student's training program. Instructors, the VRCBVI Case Manager, the referring VR counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher, and other relevant VRCBVI staff will utilize the regularly scheduled staffings (to include the student) for making any determinations regarding a student's continued participation in specific classes or completion of VRCBVI training. In the event a determination must be made in a time sensitive manner, the VRCBVI Case Manager will schedule a staffing as soon as possible. The Center Director retains the right at any time to suspend or terminate services for a student at VRCBVI.

Students must be active participants in the decision making process to end their participation in a specific class or classes or to end their program at VRCBVI. While it is not required that a student agree with any decision to end a class or training, achieving a consensus among all participants in the decision-making process is always the goal. VRCBVI staff must at all times adhere to the "Guiding Principles" found in Chapter 1 of this manual. Students have a right to appeal any decision to suspend or terminate services.

### **Program Completion Criteria**

1. Has the student met or exceeded established their performance goals for training?
2. Has the student identified that he or she is satisfied with the goals met while in training and chosen to complete his or her program?
3. Has the student's performance plateaued and additional training hours have not resulted in any further measureable skill gain? Has there been an attempt to implement various training strategies or options to improve performance?
4. Has the student met or exceeded the training goals that are consistent with their vocational goal (e.g., student who will be pursuing employment in an area where keyboarding is not an essential function and has met minimum employment related keyboarding standards)? Despite the current vocational goal, does the student appear to have the aptitude to achieve additional skills if their training were to continue (which could result in the development of a new vocational goal)?
5. Are there any disability specific issues that are significantly affecting the student's ability to participate effectively in VRCBVI programs (e.g., diabetes related medical issues, mental health concerns, etc.) that need to be addressed further outside of the VRCBVI residential training setting?
6. Does the student no longer meet VRCBVI's core admission criteria (e.g., evidence of active substance abuse, significant behavioral issues, inability to manage personal hygiene, etc.)?

## **K. VRCBVI Training – Core Curriculum**

As previously noted, a full-time residential student at VRCBVI is expected to participate in classes consistent with a typical eight-hour workday. Their schedule will consist primarily of core curriculum classes and any additional classes (such as Health Education) determined necessary for the student. Classes generally will be in two-hour hour blocks. In some cases, a student who has met performance goals in other classes may require additional training time in a specific class (e.g., Keyboarding). With approval from the Assistant Director for Instruction, a student may be permitted to take additional hours of a specific class. For example, a student may be approved to take two classes of Keyboarding in a day. However, approval is contingent on space availability and on the student continuing to demonstrate performance progress in the class, i.e., that they are continuing to benefit from the additional hours of class time.

### **Personal & Home Management (“PHM”)**

Students will learn to cook from scratch, clean and maintain a home, and take care of laundry, banking, budgeting, shopping, and other related skills needed to live independently. While working in the kitchen, students will learn to organize and label food items and spices. This department also provides supervision and guidance for the independent living apartment experience.

### **Orientation & Mobility (“O&M”) or Cane Travel**

Students will learn to travel independently using a long rigid cane in familiar and unfamiliar areas, in residential and urban areas, using all modes of public transportation with ease and confidence, locating business addresses, and shopping independently with and without a shopping assistant.

### **Braille**

Braille provides a tool for literacy for some individuals who are blind, vision impaired, or DeafBlind. Students will learn labeling techniques for food items and appliances in the kitchen, and will learn how to take notes for presentations and phone messages for employment, school, or personal use. Students may want to return to reading for pleasure or learn to proofread resumes using Unified English Braille (“UEB”). The use of the slate and stylus is taught, which is equivalent to using pen and paper. Students may focus on increasing reading speed and fluency. Students who already know Contracted Braille will perfect their use of the tools to increase proficiency and accuracy in reading and writing.

### **Access Technology (“AT”) Services**

**Access Technology:** Students get hands-on experience learning to use digital recorders and playback machines, refreshable Braille devices, and Braille note takers.

Students receive training on their own device, whether it is an iPhone, iPad, iPod, Android phone, a Macintosh computer, or tablet.

**Keyboarding/Computer:** VRCBVI AT instructors ensure that students learn to touch type so they are prepared to move into Computer class. Whether students use JAWS, Window Eyes, Magic, or Zoom Text, they can gain the skills necessary to pursue their career goals. They can gain experience with any version of Windows, whether it is Windows 7, Windows 8, or Windows 10. They will learn how to use Microsoft Office to perform necessary tasks at home, on the job, or at school.

## **Additional Training Classes**

### **Adult Basic Education (“ABE”)**

Academic classes to meet the individual needs of students may include academic refresher, GED preparation, advanced degree test preparation, and in some cases English as a Second Language (“ESL”). Students will be assessed using appropriate academic testing tools. Training is developed to meet the student’s individual goals.

### **Conversations About Blindness (“CAB”)**

VRCBVI holds weekly discussion groups bringing staff and students together to share common experiences and explore personal and public perceptions about blindness. This class provides thought provoking conversations about living with vision loss and becoming successfully employed. The class will also help students learn to advocate for opportunities and responsibilities, and to demonstrate their capabilities and talents to themselves and family and friends. Students, VRCBVI staff, or guest presenters may lead CAB discussions. At various times throughout the year, students will have the opportunity to work on teams to develop presentations that will be given during CAB.

### **Health Education Services**

Health education services are provided on an as-needed basis to students who need to learn how to manage their diabetes and other health related needs more effectively.

## **L. Student/Youth Programming (Pre-Employment Transition Services)**

### **Learning Excellence in Academics Program (“LEAP”)**

LEAP provides rising high school juniors and seniors and recent (within the past year) high school graduates the opportunity to assess their college-readiness skills. Students who have an interest in the fields of science, technology, engineering, math and health (STEM-H) are highly encouraged to participate in LEAP, although students do not have to have a STEM-H vocational goal to participate in LEAP. Classes are taught by college professors and/or graduate students and are graded according to collegiate

standards (not reflected on transcript). LEAP enhances the student's awareness of the academic and blindness-related demands of college, and provides the student with the opportunity to evaluate his or her ability to manage time and priorities. Housing is provided either in the VRCBVI dormitory or off-campus.

LEAP is offered annually during the summer. There must be at least six (6) accepted students.

Students must meet VRCBVI basic admission criteria (except age requirement) and;

- Must be blind or vision impaired
- Be a rising junior or senior in high school or a recent (within the past year) high school graduate
- Have access to and ability to use an existing E-mail account (Gmail, Yahoo, AOL, etc.)
- Have a laptop and the skills to use the device to read emails, compose and send emails including attachments, navigate the internet, produce word processing documents, and access and navigate online courseware platforms (such as Blackboard)
- Have a method for and be prepared to take written notes during class
- Be able to participate in the full program
- Be able to participate in a program that is group structured
- Be able to take care of his/her own personal care needs
- Be able to travel independently, crossing controlled and uncontrolled intersections

### **Additional LEAP Admissions Considerations**

- LEAP will serve individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities (MSD) as a priority
- LEAP is a Pre-Employment Transition Services program (Pre-ETS). Students who have been determined by the VR Counselor as Potentially Eligible (PE) are eligible for LEAP.
- Students who are being referred by the DBVI Educational Services Coordinator must ensure that the student is either open for VR services or has been established as Potentially Eligible.
- Individuals who have never participated in LEAP will be served as a priority over individuals who have previously participated

NOTE: Students who are Potentially Eligible (PE) may be served by LEAP but may not be served by any other VRCBVI programs (other than the LIFE program).

### **LEAP Application Process**

The application process, application deadlines, and programming dates will be provided during the year by VRCBVI staff. Applications are accepted until the program reaches a

capacity of fifteen students or until the application deadline, whichever comes first. Contact the Coordinator of Community Engagement or the VRCBVI Director for more information, or see the VRCBVI home page on the internet.

<https://www.vrcbvi.org/programs.htm>

The LEAP application and acceptance will be a four-step process:

1. Student will complete and submit the following:
  - online LEAP application
  - high school academic transcripts documenting GPA of 2.5 or above
  - two letters of reference
  - personal statement of 250-500 words with your full name and the words “LEAP” as the heading. Information regarding the student’s academic/career goals, interest in the fields of science, technology, engineering, math and health (STEM-H), and why he/she is applying to this program will be included.
  - The DBVI health checklist/general medical examination form signed by a doctor.
  - An eye report signed by a doctor

The DBVI health checklist and eye report do not need to be submitted if the student has submitted those forms to participate in a previous VRCBVI program. The student or his/her parents will need to submit a statement indicating that nothing has changed since the last forms were submitted.

2. For students selected for an interview, phone interviews will be conducted within three weeks of the application deadline.
3. Students will be notified of their acceptance status.
4. Accepted students must complete forms and waivers, issued by VRCBVI, by dates outlined in program flyer.

If the applicant has a DBVI VR Counselor, the counselor will be notified of the applicant’s acceptance into LEAP, at which time the counselor will need to complete a DBVI Service Authorization and submit it to VRCBVI.

### **LEAP Student Expectations and Responsibilities**

Each student, prior to attending LEAP, will be provided with written participation policies, processes and expectations. These will be reviewed with the student and the student will sign, acknowledging his or her understanding and agreement to follow the policies. The policies will include cafeteria/meal schedules, campus rules, dormitory requirements (visitor, curfews, etc.), as well as other expectations (punctuality and regular attendance, orientation and mobility requirements, technology skill/equipment requirements, dress, etc.) and restrictions (drugs, alcohol, etc.). Specific and updated “Rules of the Road” will be provided to the student at time of participation.

## **LEAP Classes**

**VCU 101** is a course meant to introduce students to the skills and behaviors that will help to maximize success in college and the supports offered to help attain those skills and behaviors. The course may include presentations on the following:

- Blackboard
- Public Speaking
- Mock Interviews
- DSS office
- Instructors
- Professionalism
- Career Exploration
- Market Analysis
- Learning Assessment
- Advocacy Skills
- College Applications
- Effective Writing/Reading
- Learning Skills/Test Taking Strategies
- Requesting Accommodations

Other courses offered during LEAP may include:

- Academic Writing
- Intro to Math/Coding
- Intro to Science (with corresponding lab)

## **LEAP Assessment Staffings**

Assessment staffings will occur within two weeks of the completion of LEAP. Students meet by teleconference with designated VRCBVI staff, their VR Counselor, and appropriate family members to report assessment results and recommendations.

## **Documentation Requirements**

VRCBVI staff will provide a final evaluation report of the student's participation in LEAP to the VR Counselor. The report will also be placed in AWARE.

## **Learning Independence, Feeling Empowered (“LIFE”)**

The LIFE program is a five (5) week residential training program for high school-aged blind and vision impaired youth, which provides basic training in the skills of blindness. LIFE empowers students to become responsible for their lives, provides them with opportunities to explore employment and college goals, and provides them with an opportunity to gain real world work experience or additional skills of blindness training. The LIFE program also affords opportunities to participate in confidence building



activities, and helps students develop positive attitudes about blindness. The LIFE program is offered annually during the summer.

<https://www.vrcbvi.org/programs.htm#LIFE>

## **Work Experience**

During the last three weeks of the LIFE program, students will have the opportunity to work part-time in a community-based setting.

## **Admission Requirements for Life**

Must meet VRCBVI basic admission criteria (except age requirement) and;

- Be between the ages of 14-18 years old and be returning to a high school academic program in the fall
- Be blind or vision impaired and interested in acquiring and using blindness skills
- Be able to actively participate in all five weeks of the program
- Be able to participate in a group structured program
- Be able to take care of personal care needs independently, including managing and self-administering medications
- Have a valid government issued photo ID card

## **Additional LIFE Admissions Considerations**

1. The LIFE program will prioritize service to individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities (MSD).
2. The LIFE program is a Pre-Employment Transition Services program (Pre-ETS). Students who have been determined by the VR Counselor as Potentially Eligible (PE) are eligible for the LIFE program.
3. Students must be either open for VR services or established as Potentially Eligible.
4. Individuals who have never participated in the LIFE program will be given priority over individuals who have previously participated.

NOTE: Students who are Potentially Eligible (PE) may be served by the LIFE program but may not be served by any other VRCBVI programs (other than LEAP).

## **LIFE Application Process**

VRCBVI uses an online application process for the LIFE Program. Because the application process is online, applications may be submitted directly by parents, by teachers, or by the student's VRC. A complete application packet consists of the online application, an eye report dated within the past year, the health checklist/general medical examination form dated within the past year, and the student's current IEP. VRCs and parents are encouraged to coordinate the submission of the application and

all required documentation. The application process, application deadlines, and programming dates will be provided during the year by VRCBVI staff. For more information, contact the Coordinator of Community Engagement, Assistant Director for Administration, Assistant Director for Instruction, or the VRCBVI Director, or see VRCBVI's website, <https://www.vrcbvi.virginia.gov/programs.htm> .

- After the application deadline, the LIFE admissions committee will review and score all applications using the LIFE program admissions rubric.
- VRCBVI staff will notify all individuals and their VRCs of their acceptance status prior to the beginning of the program.
- If there are more applications than available slots in the program, some applicants will be placed on a waitlist. The waitlist number will correspond to the applicant's rubric score.

After students have been accepted into the LIFE program, student and parent(s) will participate in an informational interview by phone with VRCBVI staff, which will be scheduled by the Coordinator for Community Engagement. The purpose of this interview will be to gather information about parent and student goals and to identify student training needs.

### **LIFE Student Expectations and Responsibilities**

Each student, prior to attending the LIFE program, will be provided with written program policies, processes, and expectations. These will be reviewed with the student and their parent(s), who will sign acknowledging their understanding and agreement to follow the policies. The policies will include cafeteria/meal schedules, campus rules, dormitory requirements (visitor, curfews, etc.), as well as other expectations (punctuality and regular attendance, dress, etc.) and restrictions (drugs, alcohol, etc.). Specific and updated "Rules of the Road" will be provided to the student at time of participation.

### **LIFE Classes**

- Braille
- Personal and Home Management (cooking and cleaning)
- Travel
- Keyboarding/Computers
- Access Technology
- Exploration of Post-Secondary Options
- Job Readiness
- Work Experience
- Conversations about Blindness

**Confidence Building Activities (may include but not limited to):**

- High Adventure course
- Formal dinner/dance
- Rock Climbing
- Vehicle Awareness and Pedestrian Safety
- Movies
- Grilling
- Hiking
- Business networking skills
- Whitewater Rafting
- Swimming

## **Work Experience**

Most LIFE students work part-time in a community-based setting during the last three weeks of LIFE. However, in some instances staff will recommend that a student continue to focus on blindness skills (Travel, Braille, Access Technology, and Cooking/Cleaning) during the last three weeks of the program.

## **Documentation Requirements**

VRCBVI staff will provide a report of each student's participation in the LIFE program to the student's parent(s). The report will also be placed in AWARE in both the service module and the participant module. The Regional Managers and VR Counselors will be notified that the reports have been posted in AWARE.

## **Other Special Programming**

### **Senior Retreat: Live Active, Live Healthy, Live Modern**

The Senior Retreat is a one week program offered once a year for seniors experiencing vision loss and a plus one (a loved one, family member, or friend). Seniors with vision loss affecting their ability to read, get around independently, take care of his/her home, and/or enjoy hobbies are eligible to participate. The program provides the following services:

- Discussions about vision loss
- Daily living skills
- Independent travel
- Access technology skills such as learning to use iOS devices
- Diabetic information and training on the use of talking glucometers
- Nutritional consultation
- Recreational activities that are designed to promote a healthy and active lifestyle
- Additional resources

Participants must meet the following qualifications to attend:

- Legally blind or vision impaired (VRCBVI requires visual acuity and visual fields information for scheduling purposes)
- 55 or older
- Must self-administer all medications and manage personal needs independently (VRCBVI uses no medical staff or personal care attendants for the retreat).
- Physical health, stamina, and functional ability to participate fully in all retreat activities from morning through evening (breakfast starts at 7:30 am).

### **Senior Retreat Application Process**

The DBVI Rehabilitation Teacher will complete the designated application process for individuals who are interested in the senior retreat. The application process, application deadlines, and programming dates will be provided during the year by VRCBVI staff.

Contact the Coordinator of Community Engagement, Assistant Director for Instruction, or the VRCBVI Director for more information.

### **Saturday Technology Seminars**

Throughout the year, VRCBVI will offer various Saturday technology seminars. These group-structured classes are designed to provide instruction from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM on various topics such as: iOS devices, Excel, Braille note takers, PowerPoint, etc. There is a charge of \$25 for each participant to cover materials and lunch. Flyers announcing these seminars, including application information, will be sent periodically to all DBVI staff and will be posted at [VRCBVI.org](http://VRCBVI.org). For more details, contact the Coordinator of Community Engagement or the VRCBVI Director.

## **M. VRCBVI and the Virginia Enterprises for the Blind (VEB)**

NOTE: For more specific information about the Virginia Enterprises for the Blind, see the [DBVI homepage](#) on the internet or the [VR Policy and Procedure Manual: Chapter 7.1](#).

VRCBVI has responsibility for providing an initial evaluation of individuals who have been referred to participate in the Virginia Enterprises for the Blind (VEB). The evaluation includes a blindness skills assessment of up to four weeks, providing the candidate and the VR Counselor with recommendations regarding the candidate's interest in, and readiness to, participate in the VEP Vending Stand Evaluation. Based on the results of the assessments, candidates may be required to participate in vocational evaluation and blindness skills training if the candidate has deficits in any of the required areas of competency.

All potential candidates for the Randolph-Sheppard Managers Program are required to participate in evaluation at VRCBVI or have a field assessment approved by the VEB Education Coordinator, specifically for the purpose of assuring that vending service

manager is the right vocational choice for the individual. The following processes will be adhered to:

1. Potential candidates and the VR Counselor (optional) will engage in an informational interview with the Education Coordinator for the Virginia Enterprises for the Blind as a clarification tool to learn more about the program
2. Determine aptitude and achievement in academics – high school equivalency required - using the WRAT – IV (or more current) testing instrument
3. Determine legal blindness – eye report within one year
4. Determine physical capacity necessary to meet Vending Manager – Job Description, Appendix R
5. Independent maintenance of all medical conditions
6. Low Vision Aid Evaluation and aids purchased, if needed
7. Hearing Evaluation and aids purchased, if recommended
8. Counselor completes application to VRCBVI for Vending Stand Evaluation
9. Candidate accepted to VRCBVI Evaluation for Vending Stand
10. Candidate completes VRCBVI Evaluation for Vending Stand, which includes completing business level graduation requirements of VRCBVI training program: Orientation and Mobility, Keyboarding/Computer, Braille (if appropriate), Personal and Home Management, to include labeling and organizational skills by means that works for the individual, and Access Technology
11. Complete blindness skills training to meet business level graduation requirements (if needed)
12. Complete a site visit to the VEB training facility
13. Other assessments or relevant information as needed (examples might include but are not be limited to interest inventories, low vision evaluation, and access technology assessments). Another critical component for the evaluation and assessment process is to provide customers with an opportunity to determine whether the Food Managers Program is right for them.

### **Orientation and Mobility Skills**

Candidates will demonstrate independent cane travel skills in familiar and unfamiliar areas and in residential and urban areas (including DC), using all modes of public transportation with ease and confidence, locating business addresses, and shopping independently using a shopping assistant. It is recommended that dog guide users go through the complete evaluation twice: once with the dog guide and again using a long cane. (This is so that in the event that the dog guide is unable to perform; the candidate is able to travel to the vending stand confidently).

### **Keyboarding (Must complete before moving into Computer)**

Candidates will demonstrate manipulation of keyboard with 95% accuracy, type 25 net words per minute, and type business and personal letters in block style, proofed, edited and modified block style letter with envelopes.

### **Computer Skills (Must qualify with a minimum of 25 words-per-minute)**

Candidate will demonstrate business level skills in Microsoft Office 2010 to include Word, Excel, Internet and E-mail, Web based applications, and PowerPoint. Participant will demonstrate the ability to use the adaptive equipment required for his/her optimum computer use.

### **Personal and Home Management (PHM)**

Candidate will have understanding of cooking utensils and their uses, cooking terms, ability to follow and interpret recipes, and plan appropriate menus. Candidate will have excellent cleaning skills for all surfaces, which include sweeping, mopping, knowledge of cleaning products (residential), as well as being able to maintain safety in an independent environment.

Candidate will demonstrate the ability to independently plan, budget, shop, prepare, serve, clean up, and act as host/hostess for two graduation meals. The meal requirements include the meal being made from scratch using no convenience foods or drink, each meal must contain one meat, one starch, one vegetable, one bread, one dessert, and one beverage. The first meal will be the formal meal with a budget of \$80.00 for 6-8, which will include tablecloths and napkins that will need to be ironed before being placed on the table. Guests for this meal will be served by the host. The second meal is a buffet style meal for 15-20 people with a budget of \$120.00. The candidate will demonstrate excellent personal grooming habits, hygiene, and business casual dress. Clothes are to be well kept and presentable.

### **Reading, Spelling, and Record Keeping Skills**

Comprehending study materials, written instructions, and his/her own study notes. Managing written materials, such as inventory records, bills, business letters, etc. 10<sup>th</sup> grade equivalency reading comprehension based on Wide Range Achievement Test – IV (most recent)

### **Mathematics**

Candidates will demonstrate the ability to perform computations including subtraction, addition, multiplication, division, fractions, decimal, and percentage math skills. 10<sup>th</sup> grade equivalency based on Wide Range Achievement Test – IV (most recent).

### **Access Technology**

Candidates will be evaluated to determine whether specific access technology might be beneficial in both the evaluation and training components of the Randolph-Sheppard Vending Managers Program. Written recommendations for specific access technology goods and services will be provided to the VRCBVI case manager and VR Field Counselor by the DBVI Rehabilitation Engineer as soon as access technology needs

are identified in order to expedite ordering and reception of adaptive/computer equipment prior to the beginning of the vending stand training. VR Field Counselors will order access technology costing more than \$200. Access technology recommendations will be summarized during the reporting period when the equipment is recommended.

## **Job Readiness**

Candidates must possess the following prior to completing VRCBVI VEP Training Evaluation

- A. Professional Resume
- B. Interview skills

## **N. VRCBVI Student Computer Guidance**

VRCBVI understands the important role technology skills play in obtaining quality employment. Upon successful completion of an evaluation to include access technology needs, Vocational Rehabilitation and Rehabilitation Teaching students who participate in a full-time training program may be issued a computer for use during the duration of their training. Students will be required to use the equipment as instructed in all classes, for homework assignments, and to develop job-readiness skills. Students may have the computer assigned to them upon their successful completion of training at VRCBVI to assist them in their job seeking, for other employment related needs, and continuation of skill development with the computer.

Individuals who participate in short-term or part-time training programs at VRCBVI will not be issued a computer. However, the VRCBVI Director may make an exception to this policy as appropriate.

### **Student Computer Eligibility Criteria for purchase of a Computer**

In order for a VRCBVI student to have a computer purchased for use while in training at VRCBVI, the following criteria must be met:

1. The student must be actively and appropriately participating on a full-time basis in training at VRCBVI, and;
2. The student must have successfully completed the keyboarding class at the business or educational use level for Vocational Rehabilitation students and at the personal use level for Rehabilitation Teaching students, and;
3. The VRCBVI Access Technology instructor recommends the purchasing of the computer for the student, and;

4. The student does not have access to an acceptable computer (i.e., one that meets appropriate standards) for use while at VRCBVI (either one that was previously purchased by DBVI or purchased by the individual).

### **Student Computer Eligibility Criteria for (purchase) of a Computer**

In order for a student to have their computer assigned to them, the following criteria must be met:

1. The student has (or will within the next 30 days) successfully completed their training at VRCBVI, and;
2. The student communicates through actions and words their intent to actively use the loaned equipment in support of their plan goal, and;
3. The student agrees to the terms and conditions and signs the Equipment Agreement-Receipt Form.

Note: Successfully completing training means that the student did not self-terminate their training, nor have their training terminated by VRCBVI.

### **VRCBVI Student Computers Procedure**

When students are approximately three weeks from successfully completing the keyboarding curriculum, the Access Technology Instructor will email a recommendation to the VRCBVI case manager, with a copy to the student's Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher, that the student should have a laptop computer purchased for them from Computers for the Blind. The recommendation will include the costs associated with this equipment.

If the student meets the eligibility criteria, the Vocational Rehabilitation or Rehabilitation Teaching staff in the regional office will order the computer and have it shipped to the student at VRCBVI. The VR Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher will place the computer on the student's Individualized Plan. The Access Technology Instructor will help the student set the computer up for their unique use. The VRCBVI Technology Instructor is responsible for having the student review and sign the Equipment Agreement – Receipt Form. The signed form will be provided to the VRCBVI Case Manager who will scan and place the form in the Service Module of AWARE. The equipment that is purchased for the student will be used to complete their VRCBVI program, with the intent that it be used in their continued rehabilitation program.

When the student is approximately 30 days from completing their training at VRCBVI, the VRCBVI Case Manager determines in consultation with VRCBVI staff if the student has met the criteria to have their purchased computer assigned to them. If the student has not met the criteria, the purchased computer will be retrieved from the student prior to them leaving VRCBVI and retained by VRCBVI for another student. If they do meet



the criteria, the VRCBVI Case Manager will email the student's VR Counselor indicating the student will be taking the purchased computer with them when they complete training at VRCBVI.

Purchased student computers may be removed from the student during training at VRCBVI if it is determined that the student:

1. No longer needs the equipment;
2. Is abusing or damaging the equipment;
3. Is inappropriately using the equipment;
4. Is no longer actively and appropriately participating in their training.

NOTE: If an individual returns to VRCBVI for additional training within three years, any additional equipment needs will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

## **O. Instructor Absence**

Instructors who are planning to take leave requiring absence from their assigned classes must ensure adequate coverage of their classes if at all possible. For planned absences:

1. The instructor must notify their supervisor and obtain approval.
2. The instructor must complete and submit a leave request in TAL (through Employee Direct found on the intranet) prior to the planned absence.
3. The instructor will ensure that their classes are covered in their absence by communicating to their supervisor who the substitute instructor is and by creating and sending lesson plans to the covering substitute instructor(s) and to their supervisor. It is the instructor's responsibility to request a substitute teacher in advance of their planned absence.
4. The instructor must ensure that all student reports (that are due when planned absence is to occur) are submitted before the planned absence.
5. The instructor will retrieve notes/attendance from the covering instructor(s) upon their return.

For unplanned absences:

1. The instructor will notify the VRCBVI reception desk and their supervisor at least one hour before VRCBVI opens and communicate to the supervisor the circumstances requiring their absence and type of leave they are planning to take.
2. If at all possible, the instructor will ensure that their classes are covered in their absence and, if so, identify their class substitute instructor(s) and communicate lesson plans to the covering instructor(s) and to their supervisor. If the instructor

is unable to ensure substitute instructors are available and/or share lesson plans (e.g., illness, personal emergencies, etc.), the instructor's supervisor will ensure substitute instructors are made available to cover the necessary classes.

3. When the instructor returns to VRCBVI, they will complete and submit a leave request through TAL (Employee Direct on the intranet).
4. The instructor will retrieve notes/attendance from the covering instructor(s) upon their return.

## **P. Foreign language interpreters**

ESL students may require the use of an interpreter during their participation at VRCBVI. Interpreter services will be arranged and coordinated by the VRCBVI Case Manager. The VR Counselor is responsible for requesting interpreting services as part of the application process and for funding of these services.

In order to ensure that students at VRCBVI who are receiving interpreter services achieve maximum benefit of their training, the student and the interpreter shall adhere to the expectations outlined in the ***Translator-Interpreter Agreement***. The VRCBVI Case Manager will ensure the agreement is reviewed with both the student and their interpreter and signed/dated. The agreement will be placed in the student's case file.

## **Q. Deaf Blind Communication Assistance**

Students who are DeafBlind may require the assistance of alternative communication assistance, such as a sign language interpreter, SSP (Support Service Provider), or other forms of assistive communication. In some instances, students who are residing in the dorm may require an alerting device for the dorm room. The referring VRC/RT will need to make a referral, with at least three months prior notice, to the DeafBlind Specialist in their region, who will assist in recommending and coordinating appropriate accommodations and alerting device. The DeafBlind specialist will provide a letter to VRCBVI, which will accompany the VRCBVI application packet. The VRC/RT is responsible for requesting alternative communication assistance and ensuring the individuals bring the appropriate alerting device and for funding of these services. The VRCBVI case manager will assist with scheduling appropriate communication assistance.

In the event an interpreter does not show up and communication assistance is not available, VRCBVI will contact the Deaf Blind specialist for assistance.

## **R. VRCBVI Volunteer Policy**

Prior to assuming a volunteer staff role at VRCBVI, the individual must complete all necessary paperwork as described below. The Assistant Director for Administration, as the Volunteer Coordinator, is responsible for ensuring the volunteer completes the required documentation and that the process below is followed:

1. VRCBVI staff will identify any volunteer needs.
2. The individual interested in volunteering shall contact the Assistant Director for Administration.
3. The individual will complete the VRCBVI Volunteer Application form.
4. The individual will complete an interview with the VRCBVI Assistant Director of Administration and/or other appropriate VRCBVI staff to determine if the individual is the best candidate to fill the volunteer need.
5. Individuals who complete the Volunteer application form will be contacted by VRCBVI if their services are needed and if they are the best candidates to fill the volunteer needs.
6. A background check will be required prior to assuming a volunteer role at VRCBVI. The Assistant Director for Administration will ensure a background check is completed.

## **Chapter 7 Case Files and Records Management**

The purpose of this section is to provide VRCBVI staff with guidance regarding the handling and management of student case records.

### **A. Personal Information (Protection, use, and release of personal information)**

#### **1. Student File Management**

All student files (paper files), whether an individual's case is open or closed, shall be maintained in a secure, locked filing cabinet.

The student's case file at VRCBVI shall include the VRCBVI application, any supporting documents, and all required signed waiver forms. Training plans, staffing notes, evaluation reports, and final reports are maintained in the file and in the AWARE Case Management system. Documents are filed chronologically, with application documents on the right side of the file and other documents on the left side of the file.

VRCBVI direct service staff (instructors and the VRCBVI Case Manager) and DBVI management will have access to the student's case file on a need to know basis. Dormitory staff do not have access to the student's case file. Staff who need to access a student's file must take all care to ensure confidentiality of the student's record. A student's file may be removed from the filing cabinet/file room, but the file must not be left unattended at any time. Files will either be returned to the locked file cabinet/file room when the staff member is finished with the file or may be maintained on a temporary basis in a locked file cabinet or drawer in the staff member's office.

#### **2. Student's Access to VRCBVI Case Record**

VRCBVI staff will adhere to policies and procedures pertaining to Informed Choice and Individual Confidentiality as described in the DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Policy and Procedures Manual, Chapter 3.

#### **3. Administrative Challenges to Student's Case Record**

VRCBVI staff shall adhere to the policies and procedures in the pertaining to administrative challenges to a student's case record as described in the DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Policy and Procedures Manual, Chapter 3: Informed Choice and Individual Confidentiality.

#### **4. Student's Case Record Security**

VRCBVI staff shall adhere to the policies and procedures in the pertaining to security of a student's case record as described in the DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Policy and Procedures Manual, Chapter 3: Informed Choice and Individual Confidentiality.

## **5. Records Retention**

VRCBVI will maintain student records in accordance with the State Records retention requirements (per [Library of Virginia; § 42.1-85](#))

## **6. Consent to Release Information**

VRCBVI staff shall adhere to the policies and procedures in the VR Policy and Procedure, Chapter 3: Informed Choice and Individual Confidentiality. VRCBVI releases shall be dated such that the release terminates as of the date the student completes VRCBVI training. Activity waivers shall be dated to end at the conclusion of the activity.

## **7. Documentation**

VRCBVI staff will document all student outcomes, staffing results, training progress, reports, student incidents, counseling activities, etc., in the service module of AWARE. Evaluation and final reports shall also be documented in AWARE (in the participant and services modules). Dormitory staff do not have access to AWARE and shall email to the Assistant Director for Administration any relevant information to be included in the student's record in AWARE.

VRCBVI staff shall follow the designated report format for all evaluation, progress, and final reports.

Note: The staff member who witnesses an incident shall complete an incident report and then email the report to the Assistant Director of Administration with a copy to their supervisor. The Assistant Director of Administration will document the incident with a note in AWARE. The incident report itself shall be placed in the student's case file.