

Funding Your College Education with VR Support



How to Approach Vocational Rehabilitation about your Need for Funding Support for College

Before you get started...there are some things you should know.

- VR will pay up to the cost of in-state tuition for you to obtain the training or degree needed, but they do not have to pay for out of state programs or private schools if the program you need is available at a Florida public institution. They will pay for education and training programs that prepare people for reasonable careers that have a positive job outlook in our state—so not every major or certificate program will be eligible.
- How much VR will pay will depend on your family's ability to support your education. You and your parents must complete the FAFSA and apply for any grants or scholarships you are eligible for, which can be done as early as the fall before you graduate. You do not have to apply for or accept loans as financial aid—VR will cover the difference between these free forms of federal aid and your total tuition, required materials, and books. For most families, VR covers from 20% to 100% of all additional costs, so it is worth applying for support.
- You must have a career goal in mind and be registered with VR to apply for funding for college. It takes time to get registered, and VR may want you to do some assessments to make sure you are good candidate for the program you have selected. You can register with VR as early as age 14, but you will need to increase contact with your VR counselor as you approach your last year in high school to make sure you are setting things up for success after graduation.
- Once you start college, it is expected for both federal grants and scholarships and VR funding that you will keep good grades, so don't take on too much until you are sure of your ability to handle college. It is better to take two or three courses at first and get good grades than to take four courses and fail one of them. Talk with your VR counselor about your own situation and what makes sense for you. Be a good self-advocate and explain why you want to take fewer classes. Your VR counselor may help you come up with a plan to meet VR requirements over three semesters instead of two to lighten your load.

Step One: Do Your Research!

Go to <http://oneline.org> to find facts about your career path and to show that you need college or advanced training to reach your goal. This QR code will take you to a video that shows you how to use the website to get that information.



Step 2: Make an Appointment!

You can take a family member with you, but the VR Counselor will expect you to do the talking. You will need to convince them you are ready, and committed to pursuing your college education and training.

Turn this page over for some ideas about how to ask for an appointment and what questions you might expect from your VR Counselor.



This project is provided by the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc., supported in part by grant numbers 1801FLBSDD, 1901FLSCDD-01, and 2001FLSCDD-01 from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy



Here is a sample script you can use to request your appointment and to show you have done your research.

"I would like to speak to you about assisting with my training toward my career. I am interested in becoming a [\(insert occupational title\)](#). I have researched the field and there are [\(insert # from onetonline\)](#) jobs available in my area for this career. So I want to get the proper training to be competitive. I would like support from VR to help cover my tuition and books and supplies for courses at [\(insert name of college\)](#). Can I set up an appointment to discuss this?"

Step 3: Be prepared to answer questions from your VR Counselor.

Here are some sample questions you may face, and some suggested language for answering. Of course, you should answer in the way that is truthful for your situation, so you may want to work on your own answers before your appointment if you have any special circumstances.

VR Counselor: What makes you think you are well suited to this career?

You: "Well, I am [\(insert descriptions from onetonline that apply to your career that show you are a good match\)](#), and I am very good at [\(insert tasks, activities related to the career\)](#). The job requires [\(insert job requirements that you are already good at or learning about\)](#) and I can do that, and in fact I enjoy doing that—I have done it [\(insert where you have used these skills\)](#). I believe that with the proper education and training, I will make a very good [\(insert occupational title\)](#)."

VR Counselor: What have you done to investigate this career and the training and skills you need to be successful in this career?

You: "I have researched it [\(explain where—onetonline, in high school, through a relative, etc.\)](#). I know I will need [\(insert certification or degree\)](#) to get a job in this field. I know the skills that are important are [\(insert skills\)](#) and I am working on these skills so I will be successful."

VR Counselor: Have you applied to a program and been accepted?

You: "I have researched where I can get this training, and what makes sense to me is to go to [\(insert name of college\)](#) because [\(insert reason, such as can live at home, short distance to drive, best ratings, etc., as applicable\)](#)." (If you have applied and been accepted, state that. If not, state that you are in the process of applying but your ability to attend will depend on funding).

VR Counselor: What makes this a career good fit for you?

You: "I have researched the skills that are needed and I have a lot of these skills. I also looked at the job and saw that you have to do a lot of [\(insert job duties that match your talents or interests\)](#), and I am good at that. I have been interested in this field since [\(insert when\)](#) and I have learned a lot about it. It is a good match for me because I have a passion for it and will work hard to make it my profession."

VR Counselor: How does your disability impact you?

You: "I have Autism Spectrum Disorder, so that makes it more difficult for me to understand social aspects of life than other people. I have some challenges with organization, but I am working on those by learning strategies and accommodations I can ask for that will help me perform at my best in college. I have some sensory issues, like [\(describe one\)](#) but I usually deal with that by [\(describe a good strategy you have to tolerate, avoid, or minimize the sensory distress\)](#). (This will have to be individualized, but you want to show the VR Counselor you are aware of some of the challenges you will face in college and how you will cope with the demands of your program).

VR Counselor: Does your Vocational Assessment indicate that you would be a good fit for postsecondary education?

You: "I believe I can be a good fit for this career. I want to work in this area, and there are other jobs that are related, but I would like to focus on becoming a [\(insert occupational title\)](#). I am a hard worker and I think I can really apply myself to things that interest me. I did well in classes that interested me in school and I believe the same will be true in college."

VR Counselor: Have you applied for federal financial aid and grants?

You: "My parents and I have done the FAFSA. We are eligible for [\(insert any grants/scholarships the FAFSA said you were eligible for\)](#) and we will apply for that, but we cannot take loans. Going to college on grant funding alone will not cover all the tuition and books, so that is why I am coming to you. We will have a [\(insert dollar amount of annual tuition minus grant funding indicated in the FAFSA\)](#) shortfall if all we have is the federal funding."

VR Counselor: Well, you have to commit to attending college full time, can you do that?

You: "I would love to attend full time, but I am concerned that this is going to be a lot different than high school. I want to get off to a good start. I struggled with organization in high school, especially long term projects. I think I could handle two or maybe three classes the first semester, and then take a full load later. I also have to depend on my parents to drive me there, so it would be best if it could be just 2 or 3 days a week instead of five to start. Could I start off with 2 or 3 classes, and then if I do well, add more classes the second term?"

VR Counselor: No, you really need to be attending college full time to have us pay for you.

You: "Are you sure? I heard from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and CARD that the number of classes required is a function of the individual student's needs and mitigating circumstances. For me, my organizational skills are something that is a mitigating factor. Can we check with your supervisor, or have my CARD representative show you in the VR manual where it explains this?"