

## CHAPTER IX – A

Revised 1/2013

### College Training

DBVI will sponsor college/university academic training when college training is required by the individual to accomplish their vocational goal. In certain instances and when approved by the Regional Manager, DBVI may consider sponsoring remedial course work that is required in order for a student to participate in college/university training.

#### A. Selecting and Applying for Admission to a College Program

1. Written documentation of the individual's ability to succeed in a post-secondary academic setting is required to support DBVI sponsorship of college training. Documentation may include high school records, aptitude and achievement test scores, college preparatory program results, college-board scores, previous college transcripts, and statements of the individual's motivation. VR Counselors may include documentation of other factors as needed.
2. The VR counselor will:
  - a. Begin working with college bound transition aged individuals no later than their junior year of high school.
  - b. Provide vocational guidance and counseling to assist individuals in selecting a college or university based on:
    1. The degree program that will best prepare the individual to accomplish their vocational goal as specified in their Individual Plan for Employment (IPE).
    2. Whether the college or university can meet the individual's accommodations needs including reader services, testing, housing, assistive technology, transportation, or other specialized accommodations.
  - c. The individual's informed choice.

#### B. College and University Training

1. Virginia colleges and universities  
DBVI will only sponsor students who attend accredited colleges or universities on the approved college list located in the [DARS Training and Facilities Manual, Volume III](#). *When a college or university is not on the approved list, VR Counselors will contact the DARS Education Services Coordinator to seek assistance in determining whether the school is accredited and whether the school can be added to the approved college list.*
2. Private and out-of-state colleges and universities  
Students may attend private and out-of-state colleges and universities; DBVI will only sponsor students who attend accredited colleges or universities on the approved college list located in the [DARS Training and Facilities Manual, Volume III](#). When a student makes the informed choice to attend an out-of-state college or university, VR Counselor must provide written documentation in the student's case file that guidance and counseling has been provided to ensure the

student fully understands any participation in cost of services and whether DBVI will provided sponsorship of tuition and other services for the out-of-state choice.

3. When a specific degree is not available at a Virginia state-supported college or university, the out-of-state tuition and fees can be paid in full. Examples of degrees that are not offered in Virginia are Orientation and Mobility and Rehabilitation Teaching.
4. Graduate degrees  
DBVI will sponsor students in graduate degree programs if the graduate degree is required for the student to accomplish their vocational goal as identified in the student's IPE.
5. Sectarian colleges and universities  
Sectarian means existing primarily for the purposes of providing religious training or theological education, rather than collegiate or graduate education (per Phan v. Virginia 806 F.2d 516 4th Circuit, 1986). A church-affiliated school is not necessarily a sectarian school. DBVI shall not authorize or approve any payments or reimburse the student for religious training or theological education at a seminary or sectarian school for students having an established vocational goal related to a religious vocation ([Virginia Constitution Article VIII, Section 11.](#)) If a student elects to attend a sectarian college or university, DBVI will only sponsor equipment, reader services, or other services that do not result in direct payment to the sectarian college or university by the agency. Sectarian colleges or universities will not appear on the "approved college list" located in the [DARS Training and Facilities Manual, Vol. III](#). VR Counselors must review the approved list when considering colleges or universities that are affiliated with religious dominations. DBVI may sponsor a student seeking a degree which is religious in nature as long as the student does not attend a sectarian college or university.

#### C. Academic Requirements

1. Full-time students:
  - a. To be considered full-time in bachelor or associate degree programs, students must take 12 credit hours per semester.
  - b. DBVI requires full-time bachelor degree students to complete required coursework in no more than nine semesters. Supervisory approval is required for sponsorship of summer semesters or extensions of the nine semester requirement.
  - c. Full-time associates degree students in two-year college programs must complete required coursework in five semesters. Supervisory approval is required for sponsorship of summer semesters or extension of the five semester requirement.
  - d. Students must inform their VR counselor if their credit hours drop below full-time student status or if they change their course of study.
  - e. Full-time students may receive sponsorship of tuition, books, fees, housing, maintenance, transportation, personal incidentals, and other approved costs commensurate with their participation in cost of services based on financial need.

2. Part-Time students:
    - a. To be considered part-time, students must take fewer than 12 credit hours per semester.
    - b. DBVI requires part-time bachelor degree students to complete their required coursework in no more than seven years.
    - c. Part-time associate degree students must complete their required coursework in no more than 3.5 years.
    - d. Students must inform their VR counselor if they change their course of study or move to full-time student status.
    - e. Part-time students may receive sponsorship of tuition, books, fees, transportation, or other approved costs commensurate with their participation in cost of services based on financial need.
  3. Graduate degree programs
    - a. Nine credit hours per semester are considered full time for graduate study.
    - b. Full-time students may receive sponsorship of tuition, books, fees, housing, maintenance, transportation, personal incidentals, and other approved costs commensurate with their participation in cost of services based on financial need.
    - c. Part-time students may receive sponsorship of tuition, books, fees, transportation and other approved costs commensurate with their participation in cost of services based on financial need. Maintenance and personal incidentals will not be sponsored for part-time students.
  4. Grade Point Average
    - a. DBVI will sponsor full and part-time college/university/graduate students who maintain good academic standing at the institution in which they are enrolled.
    - b. DBVI will not sponsor classes from which the student has withdrawn unless approved by the Regional Manager and VR Director.
    - c. DBVI will not sponsor classes a student is required to retake due to their previous failing of the class unless approved by the Regional Manager and VR Director.
- D. Family Assistance/Emancipation
1. Single students regardless of age, who have been residing within their parent's home, are considered part of the family unit unless they meet the following conditions for emancipation:
    - a. The minimum age for a college student to be emancipated is 24 years of age, or upon the completion of an undergraduate degree.
    - b. Students less than 24 years of age can also be emancipated if they are married or have been maintaining their own household independent of their family.
    - c. Occupying an apartment or dorm room in order to attend college does not qualify the student to be determined emancipated by the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

#### E. Student Participation in Cost of Services

1. [The Financial Determination/Redetermination Statement \(DBVI 70-006\)](#) determines consumer participation in cost of services and must be completed initially and reviewed annually prior to DBVI sponsorship of academic training.
2. Full-time college students who are responsible for participation in cost of services ([based on the DBVI-70-006, Financial Determination/Redetermination Statement](#)) will receive reader services and adaptive equipment at no cost from DBVI when these services are required in order for the student to participate in their academic program.
3. Students who are not responsible for participation in cost of services ([based on the DBVI-70-006, Financial Determination/Redetermination Statement](#)) will receive VR services to support their academic training at no cost.

#### F. Comparable Benefits

1. DBVI requires that all college bound students apply for Federal Student Aid and other public or private scholarships and grants; the VR Counselor will assist the student in identifying financial aid options.
  - a. Students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by the federal and state deadlines established and maintained by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Federal Student Aid for the semester in which the student plans to attend college. [Home - FAFSA on the Web-Federal Student Aid](#). DBVI will not sponsor college expenses for students who have not completed and submitted the FAFSA.
  - b. Student Aid Report (SAR) – students must provide the VR Counselor with a copy of the SAR once it has been received by the student from the College Scholarship Service. The SAR determines the amount, if any, of the Pell Grant award. Failure by the student to provide the SAR to the VR Counselor will result in DBVI not providing sponsorship for the second quarter or semester.
  - c. Students are required to accept Federal Student Aid Grants and scholarships and use those funds toward the cost of necessary school expenses.
  - d. Students are not required to apply for or accept student loans.
  - e. Title IV of the Higher Education Act states that in order to receive a grant, loan, or any work assistance, a student must not owe a refund on funds previously received or be in default on any student loan (20 US. C. Section 1091 (a) (3)). There may be occasions when it would be a true hardship for a student to repay the loan and, students who default on any educational loans are required to clear their default status prior to DBVI sponsorship of academic programs unless a true hardship can be documented by the student and the VR Counselor obtains supervisory approval. A "true hardship" is defined as a student who has limited or no financial resources available and cannot work out a satisfactory repayment agreement with the lender. In this instance, VR assistance

may be appropriate. The VR counselor must document the supervisor's approval in the case narrative.

- f. VR Counselors must document the student's application for and acceptance of all comparable benefits
- g. Students are required to provide DBVI with the financial aid award letter from the college/university the student plans to attend. DBVI will determine the amount of financial sponsorship of academic training based on the college/university financial aid award letter, DBVI Financial Determination/Redetermination statement, and the maximum fees established for tuition, housing, books, incidentals, meals as documented in the DARS Training and Facilities manual, Volume III DARS link.
- h. The Tuition Assistance Grant Program (TAGP) is administered by The State Council of Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) James Monroe Building, 101 North 14th Street, Richmond, Virginia, 23219. Information regarding the TAGP and other statewide financial assistance programs can be located by visiting the SCHEV website at <http://www.schev.edu/>. TAGP provides non-need-based aid to Virginia students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs at Virginia's private institutions. VR does not consider this grant a comparable benefit. This grant goes directly to the private institution for tuition on behalf of the VR student. If the institution does not need the full amount of the grant, the remaining funds are returned to the Council of Higher Education.
- i. Any special grant routinely given by the private college or university intended to offset the higher cost of tuition and/or room and board charged by the private institution will not be applied as a comparable benefit.
- j. Monetary Merit Awards - A monetary merit award provided to a student by a civic, professional, social, or consumer advocacy organization, such as the [National Federation of the Blind](#), or the [American Council of the Blind](#), in most instances will not be considered a comparable benefit. If the use of the award is unrestricted by the donor, it will not be considered as a comparable benefit. When the award is merely earmarked "educational," it is not restricted enough to be considered as a comparable benefit. For example, the student may elect to use the merit award for travel abroad or some other educational enriching experience. Merit gifts that are not considered as a comparable benefit will also be disregarded when considering financial need of a student. If a monetary merit award (scholarship) is restricted by the donor, the VR counselor must examine the nature of the restriction before it can be considered a comparable benefit. For example, if the award is earmarked for tuition, maintenance, or other college expenses, it must be considered as a comparable benefit.
- k. The Academic Common Market (ACA) – helps students by saving funds on specific undergraduate and graduate studies at out-of-state institution.

The current arrangement is active within 16 states and allows participating students to pay state tuition while studying outside their home states. Further information can be obtained at

<http://www.schev.edu/>.

#### G. Scope of Services

1. Tuition - Students may attend the college/university of their choice; however, DBVI may pay tuition for college and university academic training for the purpose of obtaining an associate degree or higher degree in an amount not to exceed the maximum.
  - a. Public in-state colleges and universities -Allowable tuition is established annually and listed in the [DARS Training and Facilities Manual, Volume III](#). DBVI will sponsor tuition after determining comparable benefits. The VR counselor will be responsible for determining the correct amount of tuition to be authorized. In order to continue to receive academic sponsorship from DBVI, students must demonstrate their good academic standing by providing their VR Counselor with a copy of their grades at the end of each semester. **Tuition will not be paid unless VR Counselors receive copies of the student's grades from the previous semester.**
  - b. Private and out-of-state colleges and universities- The maximum tuition allowances for these institutions are published annually and are located in the [DARS Training and Facilities manual, Volume III](#). Students will be responsible for any remaining cost of tuition after the maximum tuition allowances have been paid by DBVI. The VR counselor will be responsible for determining the correct amount of tuition to be authorized. In order to continue to receive academic sponsorship from DBVI, students must demonstrate good academic standing by providing to their VR Counselor a copy of their grades at the end of each semester. **. Tuition will not be paid unless VR Counselors receive copies of the student's grade from the previous semester.**
2. Housing
 

If a student elects to live on campus at a state college/university, after determining comparable benefits, DBVI will pay the housing rate established by that college/university. If the student elects to attend a private college, after determining comparable benefits, DBVI will sponsor housing up to the amount at the closest state-supported institution. If the student elects to live in non-campus housing, the amount provided for rent would not be in excess of the highest amount charged for housing by the closest state-supported institution. When a student has to obtain off-campus housing because on-campus housing is not available, after determining comparable benefits, DBVI will pay the community rate starting payment at the beginning of the month that the semester starts and will pay rent for the remainder of the month in which a semester ends. All other maintenance cost such as meals and incidentals will be paid only during the dates in which the college is actually in session.

DBVI will not pay housing and maintenance for a student attending college in his/her community of residence unless the student is unable to access a local transportation option or the transportation option causes undue hardship for the student. Examples may include but not be limited to a student who lives in an area where para-transit is unreliable or unavailable or the bus route takes an inordinate amount of time. In all circumstances, Regional Manager approval is required for students to reside on campus when the college of their choice in their home community. ([See Chapter III, Section G Maintenance.](#))

3. Meals

DBVI will provide an amount for meals equivalent to that which would be paid to the college/university for meals on campus. If the student elects to live in non-campus housing or cannot be housed on campus, the amount provided for meals would not be in excess of the highest amount charged for meals on campus by the closest state-supported institution.

4. Transportation

When necessary, DBVI will pay either local bus fare from the student's residence to and from classes or its equivalent if riding with someone else. Where public transportation is unavailable the VR Counselor may sponsor transportation up to the highest state mileage rate. No cab fares will be provided except under unusual and exceptional circumstances which must be documented in the student's VR case file. Other exceptions must be approved and documented by the Regional Manager.

5. Reader Service

Reader services may be provided by DBVI utilizing the established hourly rate. The student and VR Counselor must first determine whether or not the college provides reader services. The results must be documented on the IPE under the Comparable Benefits section. It is not necessary to get written notification from the college when it does not provide reader services. The maximum amount authorized is 400 hours an academic year for full-time students. The maximum for a summer session is 150 hours. Reader service assistance will be prorated if fewer hours are carried than those considered full-time. Graduate school students may need additional hours. The VR Counselor must document the justification for authorizing additional hours in the students VR case file.

6. Books and Supplies

DBVI has established a maximum amount for books and supplies per academic year and summer session; however, this amount can occasionally be supplemented and must be documented in the case file reason why additional funds were needed.

7. Incidental Allowance

Personal incidentals costs will be paid only for those students who must leave their home area for college training.

8. Equipment

Necessary equipment may be purchased to allow the students to participate in the college program. See [Chapter 12B--Forms and Office Tasks](#)--for additional information on ordering equipment and [Appendix F--Criteria for Purchasing Adaptive Equipment for Training or Employment.](#)

9. Remedial/Developmental Courses  
Remedial/developmental college courses may be provided if the course is required by the college or it is needed to assist the student to upgrade his/her academic skills in order to continue in an approved college curriculum.
  10. Out-of-State Colleges  
Students attending colleges outside of the State of Virginia may receive financial assistance rates established in the DARS Training and Facilities Manual, Volume III or the rate established by the college, whichever is less. The college must appear on the Out-of-State Approved College List (See DARS Training and Facilities Manual, Volume III). If the college does not appear on this list, the counselor must submit a request to the VR Director, who will contact DARS to request the college be placed on the approved list. It is not unusual to take more than 90 days to receive approval; subsequently it is essential to begin the approval process several months prior to the beginning of the school term.
- H. Terms and Conditions (DBVI-04-037)
- DBVI requires that students agree to and sign the [Terms and Conditions for DBVI Sponsored College Students \(DBVI-04-037A\)](#) in order to receive DBVI sponsorship for college/university training. DBVI also requires that the VR Counselor review the Terms and Conditions with the student annually and that the student and the VR Counselor sign off on the form annually. When necessary, the student's parent/guardian must sign the form annually as well. The Terms and Conditions form must be returned to the VR Counselor no later than 30 days prior to the beginning of the academic year. The VR Counselor must document the review and acquisition of signatures and maintain the annual original in the student's case file. Failure to comply with the terms and conditions as set forth in the form will constitute grounds for termination of college financial sponsorship by DBVI.