Maryland State Department of Education  
Division of Rehabilitation Services  
Post-Secondary Education Fact Sheet

IS COLLEGE/CAREER SCHOOL RIGHT FOR YOU? DORS provides financial assistance to eligible individuals who require post-secondary education to achieve the employment goal on an approved Individualized Plan for Employment. Your DORS counselor will meet with you to 1) explore whether you need education beyond high school in order to reach your employment goal, 2) confirm whether you have the strengths, abilities and capabilities to succeed in post-secondary (after high school) education; and 3) explore what post-secondary education programs are available to meet your needs.

DORS ASSISTANCE WITH POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION. DORS will consider providing financial assistance for you to attend a post-secondary education program if you have the ability to succeed, with provision of reasonable accommodations, as indicated by the following factors:

- Achievement of a high school diploma or GED;
- A high school Grade Point Average of at least 2.5 out of 4.0 in a curriculum related to the proposed course of study in college/career school;
- Standardized test scores indicating at least "average" learning ability (IQ of at least 90);
- For college, academic achievement scores from standardized testing, with reasonable accommodations as appropriate, at the tenth grade level or higher;
- For career school, vocational certificate programs and non-credit vocational courses, academic achievement consistent with required entry standards;
- At least a "C" average in any previous post-secondary courses completed; and
- Recommendations for post-secondary education resulting from career assessments, college assessments, psychological evaluations and/or other assessments.

Probationary Status. If you meet some but not all of these factors, DORS may provide financial assistance for you to attend a post-secondary education program in a probationary status for one semester/grading period. If you do not meet any of the factors, you and your counselor will discuss alternatives that might have other kinds of training requirements. However, you may attend a post-secondary program for a semester/grading period at your own expense if you wish to demonstrate that you can succeed at the post-secondary level. You, the DORS counselor and the school's academic advisor will determine appropriate courses for you to take during the probationary semester/grading period.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: DORS may provide financial assistance:

- If you require developmental/remedial courses for one semester/grading period.
- Based on tuition and fees:
  - If you are in a certificate program, are pursuing an AA degree or are in the first 60 credits of a bachelor's degree, tuition and fees may not exceed the in-county rate for Montgomery College;
  - If you are pursuing a bachelor's degree and have more than 60 credits; or if an exception is granted for DORS to pay 4-year rates for the first 60 credits of a bachelor's degree, tuition and fees may not exceed the in-state rates of the in-state public institution attended, or the in-state rates of the University of Maryland, College Park if you are attending an out-of-state or private institution.
- Your counselor will help you explore all of the programs that would meet your needs to prepare for achievement of your employment goal. DORS may provide financial assistance for room and board on an exception basis only, and only if an appropriate post-secondary program is not available within 45 miles of your home or there is a disability-related factor that requires you to reside at the post-secondary institution.
- For summer school only in exceptional circumstances.
- For a graduate degree only in exceptional circumstances.
- For courses that you must repeat due to a failing grade or withdrawal only in exceptional circumstances related to your disability.
TO GET STARTED:
1. **Contact the DORS counselor at least 60 days prior** to the start of the first semester/grading period to begin the process of determining whether and to what extent DORS can provide financial assistance.
2. **Apply for admission** to the post-secondary school.
3. **Apply for federal financial aid** at the school or online at [www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/Students](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/Students).
4. If you have not yet done so, **complete the DORS Financial Statement** to determine your financial contribution for services, including post-secondary education. If your family is required to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in order for you to apply for Federal financial aid, your family will also be required to complete the DORS Financial Statement based on their income, unless you are a recipient of SSI or SSDI.
5. Sign the form Reasonable Accommodation Information Exchange to **authorize the exchange of information between the DORS counselor and the school's disability services coordinator**, if applicable. Meet with the disability services coordinator to discuss special needs and support services.
6. Sign, and have your representative sign, if appropriate, the form Financial Aid Information Exchange to **authorize the exchange of information between the DORS counselor and financial aid administrator** regarding tuition and other costs, and any grants, scholarships and tuition waivers awarded to you.

DETERMINATION OF DORS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:
1. The institution's financial aid administrator will complete and return the Financial Aid Information Exchange form.
2. The DORS counselor will determine the amount of DORS financial assistance, based on the Financial Aid Information Exchange, DORS policy and information you provide. This determination will be made each semester/grading period.
3. DORS will then notify you and the post-secondary institution of the amount of DORS financial assistance.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES: To continue to receive DORS financial assistance for post-secondary education you must:
1. Apply annually **within required timeframes** for financial aid through the institution, including signing Part A of the Financial Aid Information Exchange as indicated above.
2. Give your DORS counselor a copy of your **Student Aid Report (SAR)** each year.
3. Maintain **satisfactory academic progress** toward a degree or certificate program as follows:
   a. Earn credit on at least 75% of all credits for which you have registered each semester/grading period; and
   b. Maintain a minimum average grade of "C" or its equivalent on all credits completed each semester/grading period; and
   c. Maintain eligibility for financial aid through the school.
4. Maintain **full-time status** (12 credits per semester, prorated for shorter terms). Part-time status will be considered in exceptional circumstances for no longer than two semesters/grading periods.
5. **Participate in the cost of training** and related services in post-secondary institutions as required.
6. **Forward to your DORS counselor a copy of your transcript/grade report and proposed course of study** for the upcoming semester/grading period.
7. Obtain approval from your DORS counselor prior to any **change in the employment goal on your Individualized Plan for Employment and/or change in major/course of study**.

Note: Failure to fulfill these responsibilities may result in discontinuation of DORS financial assistance.
The RISE Program:
Self-Employment Fact Sheet

Considering Self-Employment?
You may participate in the RISE (Reach Independence Through Self-Employment) Program in order to:

- Explore the feasibility of self-employment as a vocational option
- Develop a comprehensive business plan and receive an assessment of your plan by business and banking experts
- Determine if DORS can help you maintain, expand, or purchase an existing business
- Receive individualized technical assistance
- Explore multiple funding sources for your venture
- Obtain market information to help you select the right industry

The Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services DORS will provide limited funding for a small business if necessary, after the business plan has been reviewed by the RISE Program's Business Plan Review Committee and approved by DORS. DORS will not be the primary funder of any small business. Funding provided by DORS will be in the form of purchase of all or part of specific goods and/or services required according to the approved business plan, and typically will not exceed $15,000. Your rehabilitation counselor will explain other program and funding requirements.

Supported Business Enterprise is an option for individuals who require supports in the operation of their venture. Identification of supports and funding commitment from an extended service provider is required. Individuals in this initiative are expected to perform a core function in the operation of the business.

Types of Businesses...
DORS can assist businesses which:
- Comply with all relevant federal, state and local laws and regulations
- Involve majority ownership and management of the business by an eligible individual served by DORS
- Are organized as "for profit"
- Do not involve speculative activities,
- Are designed to be the major source of income for the individual

The Division reserves the right to deny approval and funding of a business determined by the Director to be inconsistent with community standards.

DORS funds can be used for purchase of:
✓ Tools and equipment
✓ Professional services
✓ Supplies and inventory
✓ Specialized training
✓ Initial commercial rent and utilities

DORS funds cannot be used:
◊ To purchase land or buildings
◊ To purchase motorized vehicles requiring a license
◊ To pay employees
◊ To provide cash.

How to Get Started...
If you are interested in self-employment, talk to your MD Division of Rehabilitation Services counselor about this option. There are two self-employment courses to get you started:

- Exploring Entrepreneurship - A two-session course providing information about the realities and the myths of small business ownership, including consideration of personality factors, comparison of working for yourself versus working for someone else, information on financial resources, and selecting the right industry.

- Business Plan Development - In a semester-long course, you will develop a business plan for your proposed venture. Your plan will include information about you, your business concept, the industry and the product market research and analysis; marketing plan; operations and management plan; critical risks and potential problems; community benefits; and financial projections.

For more Information Contact your DORS counselor or THE RISE PROGRAM at:
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FAX 410-863-7205 e-mail: mail@riseprogram.com

www.riseprogram.com

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