

# LRS CHAPTER 4, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & GUIDANCE MANUAL

 LOUISIANA <b>WORKFORCE</b> COMMISSION The Department of Labor	<b>Part</b> 412.16	<b>Name</b> College Training	<b>Effective Date</b> <b>*March 8, 2021**</b>
	<b>Authorization</b> Federal Register, Volume 81, Department of Education, 34 CFR 361, Part VI, State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program, §361.48, §361.50, §361.52, §361.53 and §361.54.		

## I. GENERAL GUIDELINES

College training is a service provided in order to assist a consumer to reach his or her vocational goal and maximum employment potential. Under the purposes of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Act states “To improve the quality and labor market relevance of workforce investment, education, economic development efforts to provide America’s workers with the skills and credentials necessary to secure and advance in employment with family-sustaining wages and to provide America’s employers with the skilled workers that employers need to succeed in a global economy.” College training prepares consumers with these necessary skills and credentials to achieve this goal of WIOA.

WIOA also supports job-driven approaches in career pathway systems and programs to equip youth and adults with disabilities (including individuals with significant disabilities) with the skills, competencies, and credentials necessary to help them obtain in-demand jobs, increase earnings, and advance their careers. Career Pathways are a series of connected education and training strategies and support services that enable individuals to achieve skill gains and secure industry relevant certifications. Following a Career Pathway leads to employment within an occupational area and advancement to higher levels of future education and employment in that area. Known Career Pathways relevant to a consumer’s long-term vocational goal should be discussed with the consumer during the planning process. Counselors should also discuss the current labor market and high demand occupations so that the consumer can make an informed choice. Louisiana Workforce Commission has information on labor market trends and high demand occupations that can be found at the following webpages:

Labor Market Information

[http://www.laworks.net/LaborMarketInfo/LMI\\_MainMenu.asp](http://www.laworks.net/LaborMarketInfo/LMI_MainMenu.asp)

Long and Short Term Labor Market Projections

[http://www.laworks.net/LaborMarketInfo/LMI\\_EmploymentProjections.asp?years=20162026](http://www.laworks.net/LaborMarketInfo/LMI_EmploymentProjections.asp?years=20162026)

Please note that planning a career path is a fluid process. Counselors should consider broad goals when a consumer begins a training program, especially if the consumer anticipates a Career Pathway that may result in multiple training programs. Please see the below example:

**SOC Occupation Groups**

29-0000	<a href="#"><u>Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations</u></a>
29-2000	<a href="#"><u>Health Technologists and Technicians</u></a>
29-2060	<a href="#"><u>Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses</u></a>
<b>29-2061.00</b>	<b>Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses</b>

**SOC Occupation Groups**

29-0000	<a href="#"><u>Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations</u></a>
29-1000	<a href="#"><u>Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners</u></a>
29-1140	<a href="#"><u>Registered Nurses</u></a>
<b>29-1141.00</b>	<b>Registered Nurses</b>

For an individual beginning in a nursing program, you may choose Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations when the consumer first starts training and progress to LPN and then to RN.

The Counselor and Consumer need to spend time in discovery and develop a career pathway towards long-term gainful employment. Consumers are not limited to selecting a specific vocational goal during the original planning meeting. The Consumer's vocational choice may change during the course of their training as they find a more compatible vocational goal that meets their interest, abilities, and capabilities. A Career Pathway may be achieved over a period of time and may need additional training, advanced training, and/or more than one placement. Each Career Pathway is individualized to assist the consumer in reaching their vocational potential.

Counselors must have supporting evidence to indicate that an individual has the abilities and the capabilities to succeed in post-secondary training before the agency commits support and assistance for such plans. The consumer's disability and need for reasonable accommodations should be considered when making a decision regarding supporting college training for a participant. Not every individual with a disability will be able to attend training full-time; however, that does not mean that the individual does not have the capability to succeed in the college environment, and LRS supports these consumers in obtaining the skills necessary to reach their vocational goals. Supporting evidence could include, but is not limited to, the following:

- A. High School GPA consistent with entrance requirements into post-secondary education program.
- B. American College Test (ACT) or Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) score compatible with entry requirement of the consumer's choice of college/university

(these scores can be obtained from the Board of Regents:  
<http://regents.state.la.us/>).

- C. Previous post-secondary training GPA consistent with requirements for post-secondary education program.
- D. GRE, MCAT, LSAT, GMAT scores required by the consumer's choice of college/university.
- E. Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation.

**Training must be required to achieve an agreed upon vocational goal.**

## **II. TWO-YEAR COLLEGE TRAINING (ASSOCIATE DEGREE)**

When considering college training in an associate degree program, Counselors will use the above guidelines to assess the consumer's potential for successful completion. Since most community college training programs are open for any individual to enroll, intensive vocational guidance and counseling should be provided to consumers if the counselor cannot support the consumer's vocational goal based on the above guidelines. LRS can support remedial classes for up to one year, including remedial courses taken while a consumer is working towards his/her HiSET.

If the consumer and counselor cannot come to a mutual agreement regarding the appropriateness of community college training, these cases should be forwarded to the Regional Manager for review.

## **III. COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY TRAINING (BACHELOR'S DEGREE)**

When considering college training in a bachelor's degree program, Counselors will use the guidelines above to assess the consumer's potential for successful completion. If the consumer and counselor cannot come to a mutual agreement regarding the appropriateness of college training, the case should be forwarded to the Regional Manager for review.

## **IV. ADVANCE DEGREE TRAINING**

When considering postsecondary training in a Masters/Doctorate degree program, Counselors will use the guidelines above to assess the consumer's potential for successful completion.

Consumer Already Employed Requesting Advanced Training - If a consumer is already employed and is requesting assistance from LRS to pursue an advanced degree in order to

advance in his/her career, the Counselor must first apply guidelines relative to Advancement in Employment (Chapter 4, Section 417).

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## V. TIMELINES AND COURSE LOAD (FULL-TIME STATUS)

The counselor should contact the consumer at the end of each semester to discuss the consumer's progress and provide any needed vocational guidance and counseling. Although there are no strict timelines for completion, the counselor must ensure that the consumer is progressing in his/her degree program. The counselor must assess during the post semester contact if the consumer is progressing towards completion of the degree requirements and the consumer's feasibility for continued college/university training. This assessment should be documented in AWARE Case Notes.

Consumers will be expected to maintain a 2.0 grade point average each semester/quarter (on a 4.0 scale) or the grade point average (GPA) standard established by the educational institution for degree requirements. Consumers must provide the VR counselor with copies of the grades for each semester and these should be placed in or attached to the case record.

Training-related services will be withdrawn for an individual whose grade point average falls below the established standard of 2.0 or the standard established by the educational institution for two consecutive semesters or quarters. The VR counselor must notify the individual of the potential loss of agency assistance at least one semester before terminating assistance. The individual then has one grading period to improve the GPA to an acceptable level. Failure to maintain the prescribed academic standards will mean the loss of agency assistance with tuition, fees, books, interpreter services (interpreter), maintenance, and other authorized services directly related to the course of study. If the individual continues in the educational institution under his own funding and brings his GPA to the established standard or 2.0, the individual may again be considered for funding by LRS.

Consumers in training must maintain a full academic load as defined by the educational institution except when there are substantial mitigating circumstances documented in the consumer's case record. The awarding of a degree or certificate shall be within a time frame based on the consumer's needs and abilities. Many consumers have disability related limitations that require accommodations, such as part-time status, but counselors should also consider consumers' additional barriers to employment, including but not limited to low income, foster care youth, homeless individual, English language learner, cultural barriers, single parent, and long-term unemployed, when determining if a consumer can maintain full-time status in a training program. Although counselors should consider these factors, every effort should be made for the consumer to maintain full-time

status if possible so that the consumer can progress towards his/her vocational goal and economic independence.

When the counselor has determined that the consumer can maintain a full academic load and the consumer drops below full-time during the semester/quarter, the counselor should explore whether there were any substantial mitigating circumstances that impacted the consumer's ability to attend full-time. If there are no substantial mitigating circumstances that caused the student to drop below full-time, the VR counselor must notify the individual of the potential loss of agency assistance at least one semester before terminating assistance. The individual then has one grading period to attend full-time and meet agency requirements. Failure to maintain the prescribed academic load will mean the loss of agency assistance with tuition, fees, books, interpreter services (interpreter), maintenance, and other authorized services directly related to the course of study. If funding is suspended, the consumer must continue in the educational institution utilizing other funding until he/she completes a semester attending full-time, at which point LRS may resume provision of training related services.

Grades should be secured at the end of each semester and filed in or attached to the case record. Measurable Skills Gains should be entered into AWARE as applicable.

## **VI. PRIVATE COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES**

Counselors must consider cost-effective provision of services at all times. This is particularly important when considering the use of private colleges and universities, including out-of-state or international training programs. The following will apply:

- A. A consumer may choose to attend a private university or college; however, if the curriculum is available at a publicly supported school anywhere in Louisiana, Louisiana Rehabilitation Services shall limit assistance with tuition to the actual cost of tuition at LSU, Baton Rouge (undergraduate or graduate school, as applicable). A consumer who is deaf or deaf/blind may choose to attend Gallaudet University or the National Technical Institute for the Deaf with tuition funded at the actual cost of these universities.
- B. The Counselor must apply all agency policy and procedure relative to Consumer Participation in Cost of Services and Comparable Services/Similar Benefits when providing training at private colleges/universities.

## **VII. RESIDENT/NON-RESIDENT**

LRS does not impose a residency requirement; however, LRS will only pay in-state tuition rates for training programs in Louisiana regardless of whether the consumer resides within or outside of the state.

## **VIII. EXCEPTIONS TO COLLEGE TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**

- A. Exceptions to the suspension of LRS support for training services due to the consumer failing to meet minimum grade or course load requirements may be made by the Regional Manager.
- B. Requests to attend summer school or intercessions other than usual Fall/Winter/Spring semesters or quarters require an exception by the Director.
- C. A request to attend school outside of the United States requires an exception by the Director.
- D. An exception request can be made to the Director to request consideration of exemption to any of the other guidelines in this section.

## **IX. PURCHASING GUIDELINES FOR COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY TRAINING**

- A. The Counselor should refer to Chapter 5 of the LRS Technical Assistance and Guidance Manual for a listing of approved college/university training programs.
1. Chapter 5 contains the approved costs, length of training/service, estimated cost of books, etc. for each program.
  2. If the program is not listed in Chapter 5, the Counselor must follow guidelines outlined in Chapter 5 to obtain approval from the Regional Manager to use the program.
- B. Training costs (tuition, books, supplies, maintenance, transportation, and any other such support service) are subject to both consumers' ability to participate in the cost of such services and exploration and use of comparable services and similar benefits. (Refer to appropriate Chapter 4, Parts of 412 and Part 410 for further guidance/information.)
1. The Counselor must apply any similar cash benefit a consumer receives towards the cost of tuition, books, room, board, supplies, and any other support service, before LRS provides any funds for these services.
  2. In all instances, tuition and/or fee payments must be authorized and paid directly to the school.
    - a. In special circumstances, the consumer can be reimbursed for tuition/fees. The Regional Manager is authorized to grant exceptions for special circumstances, but the consumer must provide the agency with a "fee bill" or other such invoice from the school indicating that the tuition/fees have been paid.
    - b. The Counselor must document in the AWARE case notes "why" the payment is being made to the consumer. This fee bill must be placed in the consumer's case record.
- C. The Counselor must complete the IPE/Plan. Submit to the District Supervisor for approval unless Counselor is on Independent Status. Upon approval the RCA/Counselor will enter the Authorization(s). See Chapter 4, Part 411.1 for further instructions on Secondary Approval requirements.
- \*If the total of all items/services on any IPE/ Plan is equal to or greater than \$25,000, it shall be considered "high cost." In these instances, all Counselors must have the IPE/Plan approved by both the District Supervisor and the Regional Manager.

- D. AWARE payment documents are forwarded to the Supervising Counselor (generally a District Supervisor). The Supervising Counselor is responsible for authorizing payment to the college or university.