

405.00 College and University Training Policy

April 2007 (Amended April 2009)

Related Information:

- Funding Limits (May 15, 2013)
- Edinboro University
- Q/A College and University Training

Table of Contents

- Description
- Beginning the Process
 - Counseling and Guidance Related to College Training
 - Assessing Training Necessary to Achieve an Employment Outcome
 - Assessing an Individual's Ability to Participate in College
 - Remediation
 - Selection of a College or University
- ACCES-VR Approvals and Contribution
 - Accreditation and Approval of a College or University
 - Economic Need
 - Consumer Responsibility for Timely Planning for ACCES-VR Sponsorship
 - ACCES-VR Responsibility for Comparable Benefits
 - Consumer Responsibility for Securing Comparable Benefits
 - Applying Comparable Benefits and Payment
 - Meeting Academic Performance Standards
 - ACCES-VR Maximum Contribution to College Expenses
 - Length of Training
 - Waivers: Exceptions to Limits on Cost and Duration of Services
- ACCES-VR Contribution Toward Other College-Related Costs
 - Authorizing Textbooks and Required Materials
 - Room and Board
 - Paying Actual Room and Board as a Cost-Effective Strategy
 - Room and Board in Lieu of Special Transportation
 - Schools with Support Services included in Cost
 - Transportation
 - Purchase of Computers for College
 - Internet Access
 - Rehabilitation Technology
 - Determining Support Services
 - Disability-Related Support Services
 - Tutorial Services
 - Resolving Disagreements
- Overcoming Specific Obstacles
 - Defaulted Student Loans and Requirements Regarding Eligibility for Pell
 - Consumer Responsibility for Selective Service Registration

- Controlled Substances Conviction Rule
- Payment in Advance of Financial Aid
- Reimbursement of Overpayments
- Special Types of Training
 - Graduate School
 - Cost-Effective Training
 - Part-time and Summer Training
 - Out-of-State Training
 - Foreign Training
- Documentation, Case Services Codes and Information Resources
 - Documentation
 - Case Service Codes and Descriptions Necessary to Authorize College Training
 - Note on Learning Disability Services
 - Information Resources
 - Reference

Description

College training is academic training leading to a degree given on a postsecondary level at a college, business college or university. It also applies to certificate programs that are eligible for TAP and Pell support and for which consumers are matriculated at the college. It includes courses conducted by an accredited university, college, junior or community college, correspondence study, or distance learning. This includes public, independent, and proprietary colleges and universities.

ACCES-VR may assist in supporting college training when required for eligible individuals to achieve quality employment outcomes consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice (employment factors). College training may be provided with ACCES-VR support only when the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) establishes a specific employment goal requiring this level of training. College training may involve enrollment in full or part-time study with attendance during day or evening sessions.

Beginning the Process

Counseling and Guidance Related to College Training

When an individual expresses interest in pursuing a college certificate or degree to achieve an employment outcome, counseling and guidance should focus on assisting the individual in making informed choices regarding his or her employment goal and the services that will be required to achieve that goal. The counselor will need to:

1. provide counseling and guidance that leads to achieving an employment outcome at the conclusion of training;
2. assess the individual's ability to participate in college level training;
3. guide the individual in responsibilities related to selecting the college and applying for financial aid; and

4. assess whether the individual requires college study to achieve an employment goal.

If it is determined that college study is required to achieve the employment goal, then an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) must be developed in order for ACCES-VR to support college training.

Assessing Training Necessary to Achieve the Employment Outcome

The consumer and ACCES-VR counselor should explore whether college training is necessary to achieve the employment outcome consistent with the individual's employment factors. This discussion should occur in the context of developing the IPE and should include an understanding that the college training will provide the necessary qualifications for employment at the conclusion of training.

Assessing an Individual's Ability to Participate in College

Individuals must demonstrate the necessary academic ability to complete college-level work. Recent secondary-level transcripts or acceptance by a college or university having selective admission criteria that include high school grades, class-standing, scholastic aptitude test scores (SAT) or the equivalent may be used. In situations in which competitive admission does not apply, such as open admission colleges, counselors must look at prior levels of academic performance (e.g. high school and prior college transcripts, work history and armed service training) to adequately assess a consumer's potential to benefit from college training in terms of achieving an employment outcome. This assessment should be based on the most recent information available. In some cases, high school transcripts may be too old to provide relevant information regarding a consumer's current ability. A work or training experience beyond high school may be more useful. Additional evaluations may be sought if needed for sound decision making.

When conducting this assessment, it may be useful to consult with the disabled student services coordinator at the college of interest to determine what support services are available and to better determine the student's needs. Rehabilitation and assistive technology needs should be considered as part of this assessment process.

Remediation

Required remediation for basic academic skills should be accomplished **before** college admission through adult education/Title II programs, whenever possible. For some consumers, local adult education programs and/or Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs) can address these remedial needs. Remedial courses that are not part of a matriculated program are considered on an individual basis, based on the individual's unique needs.

Some colleges (e.g. community colleges) offer the remediation courses that the consumer will need for the chosen course of study. These colleges may also be able to

provide pre-testing assessment to determine the consumer's academic skill levels and the extent of the consumer's need for remediation. The results of this assessment can be used to determine if remediation courses that are offered by the college can address the remedial needs. In these situations, the ACCES-VR counselor will consider whether the remedial courses offered by the college will enable the consumer to complete the degree within the maximum duration allowed under this policy.

ACCES-VR sponsorship of remedial courses at the college is based on the determination by the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) that they are regarded as credit bearing for TAP eligibility. These remedial courses will qualify as credit bearing for ACCES-VR's contribution as well. This includes credit "equivalent" courses offered by SUNY and "equated" credit courses offered by CUNY.

Selection of a College or University

If college-level training is required and the individual has the ability to benefit from college study, the counselor and the eligible individual should discuss the selection of a particular institution of higher education that will best meet the individual's vocational needs. The choice of training institution involves consideration of the most cost-effective program for ACCES-VR. Criteria for selecting an appropriate institution and for forming the basis for approval for ACCES-VR sponsorship may include, but is not necessarily limited to: the consumer's employment factors, the capability of the institution to provide the needed training program, the availability of required support services, proximity to the consumer's residence, and overall program cost/affordability for the consumer.

ACCES-VR Approvals and Contribution

Accreditation and Approval of a College or University

Colleges, universities and other degree-granting institutions must be accredited by a regional accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education (<http://www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation/>) or approved by the New York State Board of Regents (<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/accreditation/handbook/directory.htm>) prior to being authorized as ACCES-VR-approved vendors. Exceptions may be made where accreditation is pending or conditional and the course of study is sufficiently unique to justify use.

Correspondence, home study, and distance learning programs must be accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education. All vendors must be approved by the ACCES-VR Provider Review Unit. Costs are subject to review and approval by the Regional Coordinator, District Manager or designated supervisor before the amount of ACCES-VR's participation in the cost is finalized.

Economic Need

The following college training services are contingent on economic need:

1. Tuition;

2. Required academic fees;
3. Room and Board;
4. Required textbooks and materials; and
5. Transportation.

Consumer Responsibility for Timely Planning for ACCES-VR Sponsorship

Individuals interested in ACCES-VR assistance for college must apply to ACCES-VR by:

1. April 15 for the fall semester, or
2. September 15 for the spring semester.

This is necessary to allow for adequate time to complete the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), consider cost effective educational options and provisions for funding the individual's plan. Consumers who are unable to meet this deadline will be considered for college-level training starting with the following semester. Under extenuating circumstances, these dates may be waived by the vocational rehabilitation counselor when:

1. the individual has completed financial aid and admission procedures prior to ACCES-VR application; and
2. there is sufficient time remaining to complete the necessary assessment and planning to finalize an IPE before the semester start date.

ACCES-VR Responsibility for Comparable Benefits

The ACCES-VR Counselor's role is to:

1. Review the VES-844 College Fact Sheet with the consumer and ensure that the consumer has been informed of the ACCES-VR provisions that apply to college study. A copy of the signed VES-844 should be placed in the record of services.
2. Provide the college with the VES-845 Contribution Allocation Work Sheet at the same time as the authorization/voucher is sent.
3. Maintain contact with the college financial aid office, as needed, to ensure the student is receiving consideration for financial aid.
4. Ensure that financial aid is applied to all direct costs including textbooks and required materials.
5. Recover any advance payments that have been made once the student has received Pell or other grant monies.
6. Ensure that the student is meeting academic standards and retaining financial aid eligibility.

Consumer Responsibility for Securing Comparable Benefits

Maximum efforts must be made to secure all available financial aid, in whole or in part, from other sources before ACCES-VR funds can be used for college training. ACCES-VR support is contingent on timely application for all applicable financial aid. The consumer must:

1. Sign the **VES-844 College Fact Sheet** and apply for all available financial assistance. Part-time college students must also apply for Aid for Part Time Students (APTS).
2. Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), U.S. Department of Education to apply for financial aid within time frames established. This single application is needed to apply for both the Pell Grants and for other financial aid, including the New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP).
3. Advise ACCES-VR of financial aid awards, student loans, work-study and scholarships by providing ACCES-VR with documented information from the college financial aid office as described in the VES-844.
4. Provide ACCES-VR with written information from the college regarding the academic standards that must be met to remain in good standing at the college and to retain eligibility for financial aid.
5. Inform ACCES-VR and provide verification of changes to awards or changes in financial status.
6. Apply any excess financial aid from Fall semester to use toward required textbooks and materials and/or maintenance and transportation expenses for Spring semester.

Applying Comparable Benefits and Payment

Before calculating ACCES-VR's contribution toward college expenses, all TAP, Pell, SEOG, and other available grants and scholarships awarded, as well as available family contributions, must be applied. The actual amount of the ACCES-VR contribution, up to the maximums, will be determined after TAP, Pell and other financial aid have been applied. Student loans are not considered as grants or as comparable benefits and are not to be used to offset the ACCES-VR maximum contributions for college study.

Merit scholarships from non-governmental sources cannot be counted as a comparable benefit to offset ACCES-VR's level of contribution to direct school costs. Merit scholarships are awarded to students on the basis of academic, athletic, or artistic merit and are not based solely on specific financial need criteria. See Comparable Benefits Procedure 208.00P.

For consumers who meet economic eligibility, if it is necessary to develop the IPE prior to knowing all financial aid amounts, lines of services for required textbooks and materials and M and T can be authorized up to the amounts listed on the VES-844 College Fact Sheet for the current academic year. M and T can only be written for the first 8 weeks of the first semester of each academic year. This is subject to later review; future authorizations should be adjusted or canceled if the consumer receives excess financial aid.

Once all direct school costs are covered, financial aid may be applied to costs to benefit the consumer in terms of meeting college expenses.

Meeting Academic Performance Standards

The consumer is expected to maintain satisfactory academic performance as defined by the standards at the college attended. The ACCES-VR counselor will:

1. obtain and review student grade transcripts each semester to ensure academic standards are maintained;
2. meet with the consumer at least once each academic year to review academic performance and progress toward the employment goal; and
3. continue to assess a consumer's ability to participate in college training.

In reviewing progress toward the employment goal, the ACCES-VR counselor should determine that the consumer is:

1. maintaining the required academic performance necessary to meet degree requirements within the agreed upon time frames;
2. maintaining academic eligibility for financial aid; and
3. continuing progress toward the academic major consistent with the IPE employment goal.

If the consumer's performance does not meet these standards, the counselor and consumer should discuss how to improve academic performance. Making use of available support services provided by the college or other resources, such as the local independent living center, can enable the student to improve academic performance. Counselors can also discuss the individual's employment goal with the possibility of assisting the consumer in selecting a new goal that may not require college-level training.

The student should be notified that ACCES-VR may suspend support of college training until the student is able to meet the standards for academic performance. The decision to suspend sponsorship should be made after the consumer has a reasonable opportunity to improve academic performance, usually within one semester. The counselor should consult with the Senior Counselor and keep the consumer fully informed when making the decision to suspend funding.

A copy of the student's transcripts will be maintained in the record of services. Consumers must be advised to consult with their academic advisor or the appropriate college staff to determine credit requirements to complete the program. Consumers must provide ACCES-VR with documentation of remaining credit hours and course sequence necessary to complete the program.

If ACCES-VR suspends funding and the consumer continues without ACCES-VR financial support, the consumer may regain financial assistance when standards for academic performance are met. The student must then meet the academic performance standards, maintain eligibility for financial aid and follow the required curriculum for the rest of his/her college training to regain and retain ACCES-VR funding. Plan revisions, as appropriate, may occur to assure continued ACCES-VR sponsorship.

Suspending ACCES-VR financial support of college training because of failure to follow the academic performance plan does not result in case closure. However, the repeated inability to meet the academic performance standards will result in a review of the IPE and a possible alternative to the employment goal.

Consumers must inform their ACCES-VR counselor immediately before dropping agreed upon courses. When dropping a course reduces the number of credits to less than 12 for a semester, that semester must be counted as part-time training and is subject to the rules for the provision of part-time training.

ACCES-VR Maximum Contribution to College Expenses

For students who meet economic need, ACCES-VR can pay for the following expenses after application of all comparable benefits:

1. current, published tuition rate at a public SUNY/CUNY or community college. For private colleges, undergraduate four-year programs should be compared to equivalent public four year colleges and private two-year colleges should be compared to an equivalent public two year or community college (SUNY/CUNY) programs. Tuition for graduate study can be paid based on the actual SUNY/CUNY graduate school tuition rates. For graduate programs at private colleges, the maximum tuition is based on the published SUNY graduate tuition rate for the program of study;
2. for part-time study, actual tuition at SUNY/CUNY or community colleges, for private, undergraduate colleges, up to the credit hour rate established by SUNY/CUNY or equivalent community college credit hour rate;
3. actual required and documented fees at the SUNY/CUNY or private college up to \$600 per academic year, \$300 per semester or \$200 per trimester;
4. actual costs for required textbooks and materials can be authorized up to a maximum of \$1,000 per academic year. If additional books are required beyond this amount, the consumer should document the need;
5. room and board up to a maximum of \$2,080 per year, allocated at \$1,040 per semester (or \$693/4 per trimester).

ACCES-VR will only pay for those courses and related expenses necessary to fulfill degree requirements. Only the most cost-effective courses will qualify for ACCES-VR payment. ACCES-VR will not provide expendable supplies such as paper, pencils and notebooks, unless they are uniquely related and required for participation in a specific course, or required because of the limitations resulting from a disability.

The IPE does not represent a contract for the delivery of any specific service and in no instance is authorization made in excess of one academic year.

Length of Training

While students are generally expected to follow the usual timeframes for achieving a two- or four-year degree, if needed, ACCES-VR will provide financial contribution for up to one semester in addition to each required academic year to complete required course

work. For example, two additional semesters will be allowed to complete a two-year program, and four additional semesters will be allowed to complete a four-year program. These allowances include all part-time training and can be pro-rated for students who have completed coursework toward the degree. These time frames are cumulative and include any change in school, major course of study and case re-opening after partial completion, unless a significant change in the individual's situation provides good cause for additional time.

ACCES-VR defines a college semester as 12 credit hours or more and one college year as 24 credits or more or the equivalent for schools operating on a trimester or other basis.

Waivers: Exceptions to Limits on Cost and Duration of Services

ACCES-VR has a waiver process to evaluate the consumer's individual situation and determine whether the established cost and duration limits would deny the consumer access to services; the process is established to accommodate the rehabilitation needs of an individual when necessary to achieve the employment outcome. The counselor works with the individual to complete a full exploration of comparable benefits and/or other supports. Once all alternatives have been explored, the counselor may request a waiver as established in the Consumer Involvement Policy and Procedure. Most waivers for college costs can be approved by the Regional Coordinator, District Office Manager or designated supervisor.

When requesting a waiver of cost limits, all other sources of possible support will be considered, including TAP, Pell, other scholarships, grants, student loans, the ACCES-VR maximum contribution, and any spend down resulting from an economic need calculation. While student loans are not defined as comparable benefits, the entire financial aid package available to the student will be considered when determining whether to approve a waiver request above the maximum amounts established in this policy.

A waiver of the established time limits may be granted for up to one year at the discretion of the Senior Counselor. The Regional Coordinator, District Manager or designated supervisor may grant additional time beyond the one-year extension when necessary to accommodate the disability and enable the individual to achieve an employment outcome.

The Regional Coordinator, District Office Manager or designated supervisor must approve all waiver requests. Supervisory approval will be recorded in a case note using the supervisory review header.

If there is a unique program that is not offered in the SUNY/CUNY system and the program is required for the consumer to achieve the employment outcome, ACCES-VR may waive up to the actual tuition rate. In these situations, the Central Office Waiver Committee must approve all requests for waivers for payment over the SUNY rate. For

these college waiver requests, the College Waiver Application Form can be used. The deadline for college waivers is December 1 for fall semester and March 1 for spring semester.

ACCES-VR Contribution Toward Other College-Related Cost

Authorizing Textbooks and Required Materials

Required textbooks and materials will be authorized separately up to \$1,000 per academic year. However, if additional books are required beyond this amount, the consumer should document the need and the counselor must obtain the Senior Counselor's approval. The authorization voucher will specify the bookstore the student is intending to use. The authorization voucher will require the bookstore to include Pell or other comparable benefits in calculating the amount to be vouchered. The bookstore will submit a voucher for the actual expenditures made by the consumer up to the maximum authorized minus available financial aid. Students are expected to use excess financial aid toward the purchase of required textbooks and materials.

Receipts for each item purchased at the college bookstore by the student will not be required prior to the initial authorization, but each expenditure must conform to ACCES-VR's definition of required textbooks and materials; required for the course of study. The college bookstore must submit receipts with the voucher to document that only required books and materials were purchased.

ACCES-VR will not provide expendable supplies, such as paper, pencils and notebooks, unless they are uniquely related and required for participation in a specific course or required because of the limitations resulting from a disability.

If the consumer requires specific assistive technology devices to make use of purchased books and materials, economic need must be established. Purchases are limited to low cost adaptive items such as electronic text players, spellcheckers and note taking devices.

Additional materials and equipment required by the individual to address disability-related needs are considered separately under Rehabilitation Technology.

Consumers are expected to use cost-saving strategies, when possible, in the purchase of textbooks and course materials by purchasing used textbooks and selecting bookstores with the most competitive pricing.

Room and Board

The maximum contribution toward room and board expenses will be \$2,080 per academic year, allocated at \$1,040 per semester (or \$693/4 per trimester). This amount also applies to non-degree training programs.

If the consumer is living away from home, but off campus, the maximum of \$2,080/year can be authorized as maintenance and transportation (M and T).

ACCES-VR should not pay for room and board when a consumer is able to commute to the college. Each ACCES-VR District Office will develop a standard for making this determination, based on the availability and adequacy of transportation resources in the region. Exceptions may only be made on an individual basis by the Regional Coordinator, District Office Manager or designated supervisor.

Although room and board are usually subject to economic need consideration, when full payment of room and board is authorized as a cost-effective strategy, the consumer's available resources resulting from the economic need calculation are not considered. However, room and board costs to be paid are calculated after comparable benefits are applied.

Paying Actual Room and Board as a Cost-Effective Strategy

There are two situations when ACCES-VR may pay for the actual cost of room and board, as a cost effective strategy:

1. room and board in lieu of special transportation between home and college; and
2. room and board when support services are included in the cost.

Room and Board in Lieu of Special Transportation

ACCES-VR will pay the full cost of room and board as charged by the college, in lieu of the cost of special transportation to that college, where the costs of room and board and support services on campus are less than the cost of the special transportation, including any support services. This cost comparison should be applied only when the choice of special transportation is reasonable, based on the commuting time and distance.

Schools with Support Services Included in Cost

ACCES-VR will pay the full cost of room and board as charged by the college, when support services, such as interpreter services, are provided by the college without charge and the cost of room and board is less than the amount ACCES-VR would have paid for those same support services at other colleges.

In such instances where it is appropriate and cost effective, ACCES-VR will contribute the current SUNY rate toward the cost of tuition, the required fees and books and the full amount of room and board. If the student chooses to live off campus, ACCES-VR will pay up to the full amount of the on-campus room and board costs less comparable benefits.

To make such determinations, an ACCES-VR counselor may ask the following questions to determine whether providing full room and board would be cost effective:

1. What type and level of supports did the student require in secondary school?

2. What would be the cost to ACCES-VR of providing disability-related supports at the level required by the student?
3. Does the cost of room and board offset these supports?
4. Does living on campus create additional disability-related needs not supported by the college that would be assumed by ACCES-VR? If so, would it still be cost effective to provide full room and board?
5. What comparable benefits are available to the individual to cover the costs of tuition, required academic fees, room and board, and other college costs?

Transportation

All transportation, including special transportation, will be authorized separately in accordance with the Transportation Policy. When the student will be living away from home, transportation will not be authorized for travel to and from college. Exceptions can be made only in circumstances where special transportation is required to get the student to and from school at the beginning and end of the academic semester.

Purchase of Computers for College

ACCES-VR will purchase computers separately from direct college costs when it is clearly required for college course of study or curriculum. ACCES-VR may purchase personal computer systems for individuals attending college programs in the following situations:

1. the system is required of all students by the college as a condition of attendance; or
2. the system is required for all individuals in the student's matriculated course of study (e.g., computer science, accounting); or
3. the student's disability precludes use of campus or public computer resources.

Purchase of a computer system for academic purposes is subject to economic need and comparable benefits (e.g. Pell and other financial aid). Consumers must document the program's requirement for a computer system.

Internet Access

ACCES-VR can pay for Internet access when required for the course of study in accordance with the following provisions:

1. Internet access will be paid, to the extent feasible, only during the time period required for the course, contingent on economic need.
2. Each district office will develop a standard procedure to approve and purchase Internet access in accordance with the availability of Internet providers in the region and ACCES-VR fiscal and cost-effective procedures.
3. The ACCES-VR counselor will need to discuss the Internet access request with the Senior Counselor prior to agreeing to purchase Internet access as part of an IPE.

Rehabilitation Technology

Materials and equipment required by the student to accommodate his or her disability will be considered in accordance with the ACCES-VR Rehabilitation Technology policy.

Determining Support Services

The ACCES-VR counselor should work together with the consumer and a representative of the college to determine the nature and needs of the student regarding his/her academic activities. Once these services are identified, the college and ACCES-VR should decide how to provide and pay for these services. In most instances, these discussions will take place between the counselor, the consumer and the Disabled Student Services (DSS) Coordinator at the college.

Whenever possible, the counselor should schedule these discussions prior to the beginning of the semester so that arrangements will be in place when classes begin. Prior to discussion, the counselor should review the college's web site to determine what support services are customarily provided to students with disabilities.

In most instances, it is expected that the DSS Coordinator will coordinate provision of the agreed-upon services. Any discussions and resulting understandings must be documented in the record of services.

Disability-Related Support Services

Where there is an agreed-upon need for these services, support services such as note takers, interpreters, and tutors are to be authorized separately from the direct costs of tuition and fees. The appropriate support code will be used to create a separate service on the IPE and a separate line on the authorization/voucher. These costs are not included on the VES-845. These services are not contingent on economic need.

Tutorial Services

ACCES-VR may pay for a limited amount of tutoring services in college. The tutoring need must be required to successfully complete a required course. Tutoring resources available through the college will be fully explored and utilized prior to ACCES-VR support.

Students must provide documentation to their counselor regarding the need for tutoring in a required course, such as a letter from their instructor or academic advisor regarding the student's performance in the course and the number of tutorial hours recommended to improve performance. When cost effective, ACCES-VR can negotiate for "co-pay" of tutors with the college. ACCES-VR support for tutorial service cannot exceed 7 hours per week. Counselors shall make every effort to obtain the lowest possible fee for service, not to exceed \$15 per hour. This limit may be waived, when necessary, with the approval of the Regional Coordinator, District Office Manager or designated supervisor. ACCES-VR will not allow reimbursement for travel by tutors.

Counselors must follow up with the college to confirm that tutoring is not available through the college. The Disabled Student Services Coordinator should be contacted to help identify tutors that meet the requirements of ACCES-VR and the consumer.

Tutors must provide written documentation of their expertise and ability to provide the specific tutorial services required (e.g., academic degree in the specialty area, letters of reference from responsible and knowledgeable sources). In instances where a school maintains a list of approved tutors, ACCES-VR may consider use of one of these tutors thereby waiving the requirement of documentation of the individual's credentials.

Resolving Disagreements

On occasion, there may be circumstances where the ACCES-VR counselor and the college disagree over the payment for support services needed by the consumer. Every effort must be made to resolve the disagreement as soon as possible to ensure that the consumer receives the necessary services without undue delay or hardship. If both parties cannot reach agreement within 15 calendar days from the date when the counselor documents the disagreement in the record of service, the issue should be directed to the District Manager for resolution with the college ADA Compliance Officer (if that is not the same as the DSS Coordinator, or if it is, then the next level supervisor at the college).

If an agreement cannot be reached by the date classes begin, ACCES-VR will provide the necessary services and accommodations for that semester in order to avoid delays in the student's participation in college. ACCES-VR will continue to negotiate with the college regarding responsibilities for future semesters. ACCES-VR has established agreements with SUNY and CUNY outlining the process for resolving disputes.

Overcoming Specific Obstacles

Defaulted Student Loans and Requirements Regarding Eligibility for Pell

If a consumer is in default of a student loan, financial aid, including Pell and TAP, will not be available to the consumer. ACCES-VR is prohibited from paying for any training or related services at an institution of higher education for an individual who owes a refund on a grant or is in default of a student loan unless the individual makes maximum effort to resolve the default. Maximum effort means that the consumer must work out a satisfactory repayment plan with the Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC), lending institution or grantor and re-establish eligibility for financial aid.

Consumers are to be instructed to contact HESC's Office of Prevention and Recovery Services at 1-800-666-0991 to work out an affordable repayment plan. It is the consumer's responsibility to provide ACCES-VR with documentation from HESC that a repayment plan has been established and eligibility for financial aid restored.

ACCES-VR can consider funding of college training and related services once the student has reestablished eligibility for financial aid.

The Client Assistance Program (CAP), Independent Living Centers or other resources may be able to assist individuals in resolving their default status with HESC and restoring eligibility for financial aid. Consumers should be encouraged to seek assistance from these resources.

Consumer Responsibility for Selective Service Registration

Federal financial assistance requires registration with the Selective Service System. If a consumer is not eligible to receive financial aid due to failure to register for Selective Service, counselors must advise the consumer that he must register with the Selective Service prior to being eligible for ACCES-VR funding for college training. Consumers must provide documentation that they have registered and are now eligible for financial aid.

Controlled Substances Conviction Rule

Students who are convicted under federal or State law of illegal sale or possession of a controlled substance lose eligibility for Pell for a certain period of time, depending on the offense. Eligibility may resume earlier upon successful completion of a drug rehabilitation program. ACCES-VR consumers potentially affected by this law must apply for Pell funds to determine her/his eligibility status. If the individual is found currently ineligible for Pell, ACCES-VR is to continue providing the required services s/he needs to attain an employment outcome, including post-secondary education. The student is to be considered ineligible for Pell, not in default of his or her responsibilities.

Payment in Advance of Financial Aid

An advanced payment, usually for the first semester only, is allowed for maintenance & transportation and required textbooks and materials. This is a payment/funding advance against anticipated financial aid if the student has not received the financial aid disbursement from the college and yet requires funds for transportation expenses, for living costs when living off campus or for required textbooks & materials. Consumers must notify ACCES-VR as soon as the financial aid award amounts are received.

Payments for M and T, in advance of the disbursement of financial aid, should not exceed eight weeks. Payments for required textbooks and materials should not exceed the SUNY published amount and be listed on the VES-844 for that academic year.

Staff will need to secure the agreement of the consumer to repay any advance by use of the VES-843 Refund of Payment in Advance of Financial Aid Awards. This form is available in CaMS. Unpaid advances may reduce future semester funding.

Reimbursement of Overpayments

The consumer is responsible to reimburse ACCES-VR for the amount of the overpayment based on the financial aid received. Consumers should be informed in writing that ACCES-VR will reduce the level of its future financial contribution toward IPE services until the advance payment is reimbursed in total. This amount must be specified on the consumer's IPE and indicated as the Consumer's Responsibility on the service page. Overpayments cannot be applied to ordinary living expenses nor otherwise overlooked, should the consumer have spent the overpayment without earmarking the funds for future maintenance & transportation expenses or required textbooks & materials. Failure to repay may lead to termination of the ACCES-VR contribution toward college costs.

Special Types of Training

Graduate School

ACCES-VR will contribute toward training beyond the baccalaureate level when one or more of the following criteria are met:

1. the consumer requires graduate training in order to enter the profession, which is an agreed upon employment goal on the IPE, or
2. the significance of disability limits the consumer's ability to function in an entry-level job while simultaneously completing additional training at the graduate level required to maintain the job.

All graduate training plans are subject to all other provisions of this policy. Plans for graduate study require the approval of the Regional Coordinator, District Manager or designated supervisor. Graduate training under consideration after the development of an Original IPE must be reviewed as early as possible, but no later than the junior year, to ensure enough time for appropriate review and approvals.

Cost Effective Training

If a non-degree course of study at a college will be completed within one year, ACCES-VR's cost-effective services exception can be applied for individuals who do not meet economic need criteria. ACCES-VR's contribution will be limited to \$7,000 or the balance after TAP and Pell are applied, whichever is lower. In these instances, comparable benefits, if any, will be applied toward actual costs. The contribution cannot exceed the actual costs of tuition, fees and books after TAP and Pell have been applied.

The VES-845 will be sent to the college and the \$7,000 will be divided among tuition, fees and books. A student/family contribution may be applied to any excess costs, if applicable.

All program costs, including tuition, books and fees, must be documented on the plan for service. A plan for service that utilizes the cost-effective training provision must be

signed by both the counselor and the Senior Counselor. The justification for the cost-effective exception should be recorded in a case note, using the waiver header.

See the Cost-effective skills training section in Policy 1125.00 Consumer Participation in the Cost of Services.

Part-time and Summer Training

Part-time training is defined as less than 12 credits per semester or the equivalent in schools operating on a trimester or other basis. If training is initiated on a part-time basis, at the end of two calendar years, a consumer must have achieved the vocational goal or entered into full-time training to complete the program. If training is initiated on a full-time basis, part-time training, which cannot exceed two years, may be allowed at any time during training. If dropping a course reduces a consumer's credits to below the full-time course load, the semester must be counted as part-time and the maximum on part-time training applied.

Summer, mini-semester and intersession assistance for direct college costs may be provided only when it is cost effective for ACCES-VR to do so and if it can be documented that any one of the following criteria exists:

1. it enables the consumer to take required or sequential courses which would not be available at any other time; or
2. it enables the consumer to retake a course failed during the semester which is required to meet the completion target date on the vocational plan; or
3. it will meet the needs of a consumer whose disability restricts the number of credits to be undertaken per semester; or
4. it will advance the graduation date.

A consumer whose disability does not allow taking 12 or more credits will require careful planning to ensure that summer, mini-semester and intersession are used whenever possible to allow the completion of sufficient number of credits for completing the chosen degree within the time period for ACCES-VR contribution. The general rule of two years applies unless a consumer who performs successfully shows clear evidence that the disability does not allow taking a full-time course load. In this instance, ACCES-VR may financially sponsor part-time training beyond two years but not to exceed ACCES-VR's stated maximum lengths of training for the degree being pursued. In some instances, a student may have to complete degree requirements without ACCES-VR financial contribution.

Out-of-State Training

ACCES-VR's priority is to sponsor training within New York State. When an individual chooses to attend an out-of-state college rather than an equivalent program in New York State, ACCES-VR's contribution toward costs will equal the amount that would have been contributed toward a college within the State.

ACCES-VR may contribute additional amounts for out-of-state training when one of the following conditions is met:

1. the consumer needs a special program or training not available in New York State;
or
2. the out-of-state institution provides special facilities for people with disabilities, which are needed by the consumer and are not available in New York State.

In these situations, the Central Office Waiver Committee must approve all requests for out-of-state training when costs will exceed the maximum contributions established in this policy.

Foreign Training

ACCES-VR will only fund plans for college training outside the United States if the training at a foreign institution is required as part of a degree program at the home school. In these situations, ACCES-VR will provide sponsorship to the home institution at the same rate as if the program were provided in the United States. Foreign training must meet the same criteria as in-state training in terms of tuition maximums, economic need and cost-effectiveness. ACCES-VR will not pay for any additional costs incurred due to foreign training, e.g., air travel. The Regional Coordinator, District Office Manager or designated supervisor must approve foreign training.

Documentation, Case Services Codes and Information Resources

Documentation

To ensure that the college correctly applied all available resources, a completed **VES-845 Contribution Allocation Work Sheet** or a detailed invoice that contains all of the same information, as approved by the ACCES-VR Regional Coordinator, is required by ACCES-VR before approving payment.

Note: Colleges that wish to submit a detailed invoice in lieu of the VES-845 must obtain approval by the ACCES-VR Regional Coordinator.

The VES-845 will provide the college bursar and financial aid office with basic information as to how ACCES-VR intends to contribute funds toward each consumer's college costs. It includes information about the expected participation of the consumer in the costs, based on available resources from the economic need calculation.

In referencing the authorization/voucher, the maximum amount ACCES-VR is contributing toward tuition and fees, and room and board will be known to both the bursar's office and the financial aid office. It includes a statement as to whether ACCES-VR will contribute funds toward the cost of textbooks and required course materials.

Once the VES-845 (or equivalent) is completed by the college and returned to ACCES-VR, it will provide ACCES-VR finance staff with the consumer's financial aid amounts

and the amount of available resources from the economic need calculation (if any) to be subtracted from college costs before the voucher is approved for payment.

The VES-845 (or equivalent) will also confirm that the consumer has completed the FAFS, and that the information from the FAFSA was available to the financial aid office when awarding financial aid.

The financial aid office will allocate financial aid received by the student to either tuition, fees or room and board, when applicable. TAP must be applied to tuition and fees. Pell can be allocated to room and board costs to maximize the benefit to the student.

The VES-845, available in CaMS, has sections to be completed by ACCES-VR staff. The form is to be mailed either to the college bursar's office or the financial aid office, depending on the arrangements that have been made locally. Information to be entered by ACCES-VR staff includes:

1. The addressee. The college name and address, and the names of the financial aid officer and bursar are the minimal information needed to mail the VES-845 and cover letter to the college.
2. Student information is to be entered individually (CaMS automatically enters counselor and consumer identification information).
3. The ACCES-VR calculated Student/Family Contribution in Part C is the available resource resulting from the economic need calculation. Amounts are available from the IPE, for tuition, fees, for room and board, and required textbooks and course materials.
4. Information regarding required textbooks and course materials. ACCES-VR staff will select a statement as to whether ACCES-VR will contribute to these costs or if the student/family will be responsible for the costs.

The college is required to submit a completed copy of the VES-845 each time a voucher is submitted for payment. Since the amount of financial aid, as well as the amount of the consumer's available resources, may change each semester, one copy of the VES-845 form will be required for each semester authorized.

Special Note: Once the form is printed for the first semester, the document remains on the screen for editing. Any needed changes can be made without the need to close out the document and reassemble.

A cover letter for the VES-845, available in CaMS, provides a brief rationale for ACCES-VR's college policy, the steps required to complete the form, the importance of completing it and how it's used to approve ACCES-VR payment on the voucher.

ACCES-VR staff must complete two fields in the letter: the **addressee** and in the last paragraph, a request to the **addressee** to coordinate with either the **Bursar's Office** or the **Financial Aid Office**, depending on who the letter is addressed to.

The Comparable Benefits header, whether in the **IPE Development for Original IPE Case Note**, the **IPE Development for Changes Case Note**, or added to the **Chronological Case History/Important Events Case Note** can be used to document the consumer's financial aid status. Alternately, a financial aid statement from the college that confirms the consumer has applied for all applicable forms of financial aid is satisfactory documentation.

Case Service Codes and Descriptions Necessary to Authorize College Training

Case Service Codes and Descriptions for the cost of tuition are:

- 410X – Tuition for College (Associate Level)
- 400X – Tuition for College (Bachelor Level)
- 430X – Tuition for College (Graduate Level)
- 420X – Tuition for College (Non-degree)

Case Service Codes and Descriptions for the costs of required fees are:

- 410F - Fees and/or Licenses for College (Associate Level)
- 400F - Fees and/or Licenses for College (Bachelor Level)
- 430F - Fees and/or Licenses for College (Graduate Level)
- 420F - Fees and/or Licenses for College (Non-degree)

Case Service Codes and Descriptions for the cost of books are:

- 410 B - Books for College (Associate Level)
- 400 B - Books for College (Bachelor Level)
- 430 B - Books for College (Graduate Level)
- 420 B - Books for College (Non-degree)

Case Service codes and Descriptions for room and board are:

- 410Y - Major Maintenance for College (Associate Level)
- 400Y - Major Maintenance for College (Bachelor Level)
- 430Y - Major Maintenance for College (Graduate Level)
- 420Y - Major Maintenance for College (Non-degree)

Note on Learning Disability Services

ACCES-VR funding of these services is only for approved programs at Manhattan College, Mercy College, Iona College, and Hofstra University. If these services are required by the individual to succeed in college, use case service code 400J to authorize. These services are subject to the policy on Consumer Participation in the Cost of Services.

Case Service Code and Description for Learning Disability Services are:

- 400J – Learning Disability Services at approved colleges.

Information Resources

1. The New York State Higher Education Services Corporation at <http://www.hesc.state.ny.us> may be a helpful resource in understanding financial aid and discussing it with consumers.
2. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) issued a Policy Directive on financial aid on November 21, 1991, see RSA-PD-92-02 "Provision of Financial Assistance for Post-Secondary Education by State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies": <http://www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/rsa/pd-1992.html>
3. The Heath Resource Center, National Clearinghouse on Post-secondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities at the George Washington University has an annual publication on financial aid entitled Creating Options: 2006 Financial Aid for Individuals with Disabilities. The publication is available at the Heath Center web site: <http://www.health.gwu.edu/>
4. College and University Campuses in New York State: Directory with Contact Information is available at the NYS Education Department, Office of Higher Education web site, at: http://www.highered.nysed.gov/Quality_Assurance/directory/
5. SED Memo on Implementing Chapter 219 of the Laws of 2003; In relation to publishers or manufacturers of instructional materials for college students with disabilities to also make the materials available, at a comparable price to the printed version, in alternate format: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/persprep/chap219.htm>
6. SUNY Disability Services Council: <http://www.sunydsc.org/>
7. Link to SUNY rates: http://www.suny.edu/Student/paying_tuition.cfm
http://www.suny.info/policies/groups/public/documents/sunyregulations/pub_suny_pp_029003.htm
8. Link to CUNY rates: <http://www1.cuny.edu/admission/financial-index.html>

Reference:

Policy:

- 100.00 Consumer Involvement Policy
- 208.00 Comparable Benefits and Services
- 410.00 Non-Degree Training at Trade, Business and Other Schools
- 430.00 Out-of-State Services
- 1125.00 Consumer Participation in the Cost of Services
- 1355.00 Transportation Services
- 1370.00 Rehabilitation Technology

Other:

- Memo on Payment to Rochester Institute of Technology NTID dated July 5, 2005
- Memo (email) on College-Related Forms and Letters; Criteria to Evaluate Progress dated 5/11/04
- Memo on Strategies for Quality Cost-Effective Services
Guidance on Implementation of the Strategies for Quality