DVR Order of Selection Frequently Asked Questions

Updated November 2025

Order of Selection (OOS) is a federally mandated process when a state vocational rehabilitation program does not have enough resources to serve every eligible person.

Order of Selection Information: **https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/order-selection-information**
The DVR State Plan: **https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/dvr-state-plan**

What is Order of Selection?

Federal law requires the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to implement an Order of Selection when we do not have enough resources to serve every eligible person. Order of Selection follows DVR policies and procedures established in 2017 per federal 34 CFR 361.36 and state **WAC 388.891A.0600** through **WAC 388.891A.0660**.

If DVR cannot serve all eligible individuals, because there are not enough funds or other resources, DVR must:

(1) Establish a statewide waiting list for services,

(2) Implement a process called Order of Selection that establishes the order in which DVR selects eligible individuals to begin receiving VR services, and

(3) Provide you with information and guidance (which may include counseling and referral for job placement) about other federal or state programs that offer services to help you meet your employment needs, if available.

As of December 8, 2025, all priority of service categories (1-5) have closed.

How will Order of Selection affect DVR Participants?

If I have a case open, will I be put on a waiting list?

- **If you have applied or been determined eligible prior to Order of Selection start date:** You are assigned a priority of service category when you are determined eligible for services. Individuals who did not have a signed Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) before DVR closed all priority of service categories will be placed on the waiting list.

- **If you have completed an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) prior to Order of Selection start date:** If you already have a signed an IPE, you will continue to receive VR services. Priority of service category is not considered once you have an approved IPE.

- **If DVR closes your case and you reapply:** Your priority of service category will be redetermined when you reapply. This means you may be placed on a waiting list if your priority of service category is not currently being served.

- **If you were on the waiting list in the past:** Placement on the waiting list in the past is not considered when determining your priority for services. It is based only on your eligibility determination and assignment of service priority category for your current application.

What are the priority of service categories?

DVR has established five (5) priority of service categories that are based on significance of disability and the number of areas in which individuals experience serious functional limitations.

Priority of Service Category	**Criteria**	**Status**
Priority Category 1: Individual with Most Significant Disabilities experiencing serious functional limitations in four or more areas	**An eligible participant is assigned to Priority Category 1 if:** 1. They require multiple VR services over an extended period of time; and 2. They experience serious functional limitations in four or more areas.	**Closed**
Priority Category 2: Individual with Significant Disabilities experiencing serious functional limitations in three areas	**An eligible participant is assigned to Priority Category 2 if:** 1. They require multiple VR services over an extended period of time; and 2. They experience serious functional limitations in three areas.	**Closed**
Priority Category 3: Individual with Significant Disabilities experiencing serious functional limitations in two areas	**An eligible participant is assigned to Priority Category 3 if:** 1. They require multiple VR services over an extended period of time; and	**Closed**

	2. They experience serious functional limitations in two areas.	
Priority Category 4: Individual with Significant Disabilities experiencing serious functional limitations in one area	**An eligible participant is assigned to Priority Category 4 if:** 1. They require multiple VR services over an extended period of time; and 2. They experience serious functional limitations in one area. Participants who receive Social Security (SSI and/or SSDI) are placed automatically in at least Priority Category 4.	**Closed**
Priority Category 5: All other eligible individuals with disabilities	**An eligible participant is assigned to Priority Category 5 if:** 1. They experience functional limitations in at least one area; and 2. They do not meet the criteria for Priority Categories 1-4.	**Closed**

How is a priority of service category assigned?

A vocational rehabilitation counselor works side-by-side with you to explore and understand how your disability affects you. This may include reviewing medical or psychological records or participating in an assessment. Each participant is unique, and each priority of service category determination is individualized. However, the goal of this process is the same: to understand how a participant's disability affects them across several functional areas. If a participant's disability impacts any of the seven functional areas, it is considered a functional limitation in that area. The seven functional areas are:

1. Mobility
2. Communication
3. Self-Care
4. Cognition and Learning (Self-Direction)
5. Interpersonal

6. Work Tolerance
7. Work Skills

DVR's core mission is to serve individuals with disabilities who have the greatest need for services. This includes individuals with the most significant disabilities and students with disabilities. When priority of service categories are closed, DVR must assign priority for services based on the significance of a participant's disability.

What can I expect when I am placed on the waiting list?

When you are placed on the waiting list:

- Your vocational rehabilitation counselor will provide you with information and referral services. This will assist you to connect with other federal, tribal or state programs that offer services to help you meet your employment needs, if available. DVR cannot provide other services, such as job placement assistance, to participants who are placed on the waiting list.

- Modified benefits planning services will also be provided to participants on the waiting list. Your benefits will be verified by a DVR Benefits Planner and you will receive relevant information about your benefits and contact information for the programs that administer your benefits.

- If you have a Ticket to Work and need job supports while on the waiting list, DVR will provide information on partner programs that can provide assistance for participants who want to earn more than Substantial Gainful Activity.

- When DVR has enough resources to serve more participants, we will invite participants on the waiting list to participate in services. This is known as a release from the waiting list. As resources become available to serve more participants, you will be released based on your priority of service category and application date.
    - If you have a higher priority of service category (for example, category 1), you will be served before participants in a lower priority of service category (for example, category 5).
    - If you have an older application date within a priority of service category, you will be served before participants with more recent application dates in that same priority of service category.

What can I do if I disagree with my priority of service category?

If you disagree with your priority of service category, you are encouraged to contact your vocational rehabilitation counselor to discuss the reasons why you believe the priority of service category should be changed. You are encouraged to provide information to DVR to accurately determine your priority of service category.

Please also see the enclosed DVR Participant Rights information about assistance you can receive from the Client Assistance Program, mediation services, and the fair hearing

process. You may visit DVR's "Resolving Concerns" webpage as well to learn more at **https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/resolving-concerns.**

Will DVR still provide Pre-Employment Transition Services?

Yes. We will continue to provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities.

- Students with disabilities **who have not applied for Division of Vocational Rehabilitation services** (i.e. potentially eligible students) can receive pre-employment transition services as usual.

- Students with disabilities **who apply for vocational rehabilitation (VR) services** after OOS implementation can receive pre-employment transition services prior to VR eligibility determination. Once eligibility determination for VR services is completed:
    - If you are **participating in pre-employment transition services and placed on the waiting list for VR services**, you can **continue** to receive pre-employment transition services.
    - If you **have not participated in a pre-employment transition service prior to being determined eligible and placed on a waiting list**, you cannot receive pre-employment transition services while on the waiting list.
    - If you are **determined ineligible for DVR services** you **cannot** receive DVR services, including pre-employment transition services.

- Students with disabilities **who have an approved Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)** can receive pre-employment transition services as part of their plan.

How will OOS affect the School-to-Work program?

The law says supported employment services are reserved for participants with the most significant disabilities. All students who receive School-to-Work services also require supported employment services and are considered priority of service category 1, most significantly disabled. This is a closed category and subject to the waiting list. Services for students in current IPEs will continue as usual.

How will OOS affect students with disabilities completing school and needing employment support?

You may apply for vocational rehabilitation services and your eligibility determination will be completed in the same manner as for all DVR participants. The priority of service category assigned at eligibility determines whether you are placed on the waiting list. As of December 8, 2025, all priority of service categories have closed. Individuals who did not have a signed IPE before DVR closed all priority of service categories will be placed on the waiting list.