

DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



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STATE OF MONTANA

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HELENA, MT 59604

## A Note From Barbara Varnum Chief of Field Services Montana Vocational Rehabilitation



Welcome to Vocational Rehabilitation!

I would like to personally welcome you to our agency. I can assure you that we have a dedicated staff of individuals who are committed to assisting people with disabilities with their employment goals.

Our mission is to promote work and independence for Montanans with disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation provides a broad range of services to assist eligible individuals with disabilities to find or maintain employment.

This Client Folder was specifically designed to help you understand the vocational rehabilitation process. I encourage you to read it carefully so that you can learn what VR may and may not be able to do for you.

Respectfully,

Barbara Varnum  
Chief of Field Services  
MT Vocational Rehabilitation



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# MONTANA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION



PROMOTING WORK AND INDEPENDENCE FOR MONTANANS WITH DISABILITIES



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## IS VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION FOR ME?

### Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is appropriate for you if...

- You want to work
- You have a medically documentable disability that is a substantial impediment to employment
- You require specific services to become employed
- You are ready to be responsible for your own progress towards employment



### Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is not for you if...

- You don't have a disability
- You don't want to work
- You want VR to help you get Social Security or other disability benefits
- You are here to get other benefits like food stamps
- You are being required to be here by someone else and do not want to be here
- You are not ready to take responsibility for your own employment

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CAN...

- Help you find out what your abilities and interests are so that you can choose a job goal
- Help you figure out what barriers to employment you have
- Help you discover how to change or minimize the barriers that are keeping you from working
- Help you figure out what you need to get into employment, and how to go about getting it

## THE BASIC VR PROCESS

|  |                  |   |
|--|------------------|---|
| <b>STEP 1</b><br>Intake and Application For Services                   | (1-2 hours)      | An application for services and intake must be completed, usually with a rehabilitation counselor.  |
| <b>STEP 2</b><br>Eligibility Process                                   | (up to 60 days)  | Once you have completed the intake process and application, your case will be opened. You will receive an eligibility decision as soon as your counselor has enough information to make the determination. In most cases, this should not take more than 60 days. People who are eligible for VR services are those who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- have a physical or mental impairment</li> <li>- have a substantial impediment to employment</li> <li>- require VR services to become employed.</li> </ul> |
| <b>STEP 3</b><br>Assessment and Preparation for Plan Writing           | (up to 120 days) | During this step you may be asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- complete interest inventories</li> <li>- conduct labor market research</li> <li>- complete further evaluations to determine what job goal best suits your interests and abilities.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>STEP 4</b><br>Individualized Plan For Employment (IPE)              | (varies)         | Once eligible for VR services and finished with any Assessment activities, you and your counselor will prepare an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The plan will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- your vocational goal and date to achieve it</li> <li>- specific services that will be provided</li> <li>- your responsibilities.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>STEP 5</b><br>Services  | (varies)         | Vocational Rehabilitation services may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- on-the-job training</li> <li>- job search assistance</li> <li>- education/training</li> <li>- books, supplies, tools</li> <li>- transportation</li> <li>- assistive technology</li> <li>- or other required services.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>STEP 6</b><br>Successful Employment<br><br>Post-Employment Services |                  | When you reach your employment goal and have been working at least 90 days, you will be considered successfully employed, and VR will close your file.<br><br>Post employment services may be provided after your VR file has been closed to help you maintain your job, if appropriate.  |



# STEP 1

## INTAKE AND APPLICATION FOR SERVICES



At your first meeting, your counselor will probably talk with you about:

- Your disability and medical history
- Your barriers to employment
- What kind of job you want
- Your employment history
- Your educational history
- Your hopes and dreams for the future
- What services you think you might need to get into or stay in employment
- Information about your family, your finances, etc.
- What services we have and what VR is all about

If you want to apply for services, VR will:

- Ask you to complete an application form
- If needed, ask you to sign release of information forms so that your records can be obtained from doctors, schools, and other relevant contacts to determine your eligibility
- If needed, set up appointments with doctors, psychologists, or other professionals to help your counselor learn more about your disabilities.

Forms used in the application process may be downloaded from [www.dphhs.mt.gov/vocrehab/counselormanual/forms/application.doc](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/vocrehab/counselormanual/forms/application.doc)

# STEP 2

## ELIGIBILITY PROCESS



Once you have signed your application, your case will be opened. Your counselor has up to 60 days to determine if you are eligible for VR services.

People who are eligible for VR services are those who:

- have a physical or mental impairment
- have a substantial impediment to employment; and
- require vocational rehabilitation services to become employed.

People receiving SSI or SSDI benefits, who also want to work, are presumed eligible for VR services.

Your counselor will inform you if you are eligible or not within 60 days. If there are problems determining your eligibility or you are not eligible, your counselor will attempt to contact you by phone for discussion. It is important to keep your counselor informed of any phone or address changes.

Your counselor and you may agree on homework for you to do while VR is working on your eligibility decision.





## STEP 3 ASSESSMENT AND PREPARATION FOR PLAN WRITING

If determined eligible for VR services, you will meet with your counselor again to begin Step 3. What you get out of the VR process depends on what you put into it. VR is a partnership between you and your counselor.

Usually the first thing you and your counselor will do is talk about:

- your strengths, interests, and abilities
- the job market you are considering
- training programs and what is needed to get into them
- choices you have, what barriers you have, and possibilities of working around them

During this step, you may be asked to:

- complete interest inventories
- participate in academic brush-up classes
- conduct labor market research; and/or
- complete further evaluations to determine what job goal best suits your interests and abilities

Working together with your counselor, you will have 120 days from your date of eligibility to complete this step.



## STEP 4 INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT (IPE)

Once the two of you have decided upon a job goal and what services are required for you to achieve that goal, you will write your Individualized Plan for Employment, IPE, or Plan. Your job goal should reflect your strengths, interests, and abilities. The IPE is the document that you and your counselor write and agree upon that contains all this information.

You and your counselor will plan the steps you need to take to reach your job goal. You will write down all the services you need, when they start and stop, and who will provide them. You will also write down how much the service will cost and who will pay for what. Sometimes VR will pay for part or all of the cost. Sometimes you will pay for some or all of the cost, and sometimes other agencies will pay for some or all of the cost. Services must be authorized by VR BEFORE they can begin.

Dispute resolution, mediation, and information are available to you through the Client Assistance Program if you and your counselor cannot reach an agreement while writing your IPE.

**Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)**  
Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Programs  
Rehabilitation and Blind and Low Vision Services

IPE Edition Number: 1  
Name: JANE SMITH IPE Date: 04/29/2009  
My Work Goal: administrative assistant Date To Complete Goal: 04/29/2009

We have agreed that the following services are required:

| Service                          | Provider        | Responsible Party | Amount    | Beginning Date | End Date   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------|----------------|------------|
| Occupational/Vocational Training | Adult Education | VR                |           | 04/29/2008     | 04/29/2009 |
| Class fees and books             | Adult Education | VR                | \$2356.00 | 04/29/2008     | 04/29/2009 |
| Counseling & Guidance            |                 |                   |           |                |            |

**Additional comments:**  
I will continue to pay for my Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

**My responsibilities:**  
I will attend all of my classes. I will let Anna know upon finishing my assistance. I understand that my services are an alternative.

**We will review the plan:**  
 90 Day review  
 180 Day review

**Consumer Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**MVR Counselor Name:** Annaliese Gibbs  
**MVR Counselor Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Forms used in the application process may be downloaded from [www.dphhs.mt.gov/vocrehab/counselormanual/forms/mvripe.doc](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/vocrehab/counselormanual/forms/mvripe.doc)



## STEP 5 FOLLOWING YOUR PLAN – SERVICES

THE INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT (IPE) LISTS THE SERVICES YOU WILL RECEIVE. SOME OF THE SERVICES MAY BE PROVIDED BY VR, WHILE OTHERS MAY BE PURCHASED BY VR FROM BUSINESSES, SCHOOLS OR COMMUNITY AGENCIES. THE SERVICES LISTED IN YOUR PLAN ARE WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR YOU TO ACHIEVE YOUR EMPLOYMENT GOAL.

ALL SERVICES FUNDED BY VR MUST BE IN YOUR PLAN AND AUTHORIZED BY YOUR COUNSELOR BEFORE THEY BEGIN.

If you feel something is required for you to achieve your job goal, be sure to ask your counselor. If VR can help, we will; if not, we will explain why not.

### GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

Your counselor may directly provide guidance and counseling to you. Your counselor can work with you to help you understand the Vocational Rehabilitation program and services that are available in your community. He or she may also assist in understanding your disability and how it may affect employment. If needed, your counselor can work with you on adjustment issues and help you manage your Plan. Your counselor needs to know what works for you and needs to be informed if you are having difficulties in order to help you.

### JOB ENTRY SERVICES

Entry into employment is the ultimate goal of Vocational Rehabilitation. At some point in your Plan, the focus may be on providing direct job entry services. Sometimes individuals with disabilities are able to or need to enter employment immediately. For other individuals, employment entry services may be provided after other services, such as training, are completed.

A Plan may include assistance with:

- Locating job openings
- Completing applications
- Developing a resume
- Preparing for interviews
- Obtaining tools or licenses necessary to enter a job
- Getting a uniform or specialized work attire

If necessary, a Plan may include assistive technology and technology training if adaptive devices are required to enter and maintain a specific job. VR can also work with employers to figure out what will work best for both of you at your job.



### MEDICALLY RELATED SERVICES

Your Plan may include services to reduce or work on the medical difficulties presented by your disabilities. Where appropriate, your Plan may include participation in programs like mental health, substance abuse treatment, or physical rehabilitation. If the limitations or difficulties presented by your disabilities can be reduced, other employment and training opportunities may be available. Physicians, specialists, therapists, or other licensed medical professionals may be partners in these services. If it is required for you to get into employment, a rehabilitation plan may include items like hearing aids, crutches, braces, or eyeglasses.

### TRAINING RELATED SERVICES

It is important to have the skills necessary to do a good job and to be able to stay in employment.

When necessary, your Plan may include services that improve your skills. Training services may include assistance with:

- **Job Coaching** involves a specialist who helps you to locate employment openings and enter employment. He or she then provides training to you while you work, eventually fading away after you are stable in the job.
- **On-the-job training** may be included in your Plan. This type of training pays employers a tuition fee for providing the initial training while you work. This type of service requires that you, the employer, and VR write and sign an agreement prior to the start of training.
- **Specialized workshops or individual classes.** Sometimes necessary skills can be obtained by participating in short workshops or supplemental training programs.
- **Adult and Community Education programs.** Many communities have extensive adult education programs on computer skills, ten-key, business classes, bookkeeping, accounting and other areas. These classes can often be started and completed in a very short time and can help you obtain a specific skill that is necessary for employment.
- **Trade or technical school training.** Training through trade schools or colleges of technology may be provided in your Plan. The length of training offered through these schools varies, and programs may include nursing, automotive repair, computer support, bookkeeping, among many others.
- **Community colleges.** Montana has several community colleges that offer one-year certificates and two-year degrees. A Plan may include assistance in attending a local community college.
- **Colleges or universities.** Some VR clients have received assistance in attending universities, like Montana State University and The University of Montana. A Plan for qualifying students may include assistance with tuition, books, supplies, specialized equipment, tutors and other school-related services.

You and your counselor will need to talk about your abilities and resources available to you. When considering training, it is important to keep basic factors in mind:

1. Can you afford to cover living expenses while you attend school?
2. What are your current skills, abilities, interests and resources?
3. What are your chances of success in employment after training?
4. What financial resources are available to you?

There are some tasks your counselor will ask you to do when considering a college, university, or technical school: a) participate in academic testing and brush-up, b) apply for admission, c) apply for financial aid (VR is unable to determine what assistance you will need until the college gives you a financial aid award letter), d) meet with the school personnel to determine what their placement rate is in the field you are interested in, e) meet with the school personnel to talk about accommodations you may need in the classroom for your disability and f) bring in your financial aid award letter to your VR counselor as soon as you get it.

### PROGRAM SUPPORT SERVICES

Sometimes while you are receiving services, it may be necessary for you and your counselor to solve unique problems. In some cases, you may be required to have specialized tools, safety equipment, or a uniform to enter employment; unique adaptive equipment to be successful in training or employment; or gasoline or public transportation assistance to resolve transportation issues. Your VR counselor will work with you and assist you, when possible, as these needs arise.

### OTHER UNIQUE SERVICES

There are other unique services that may be available through Montana Vocational Rehabilitation.

- **Self-employment.** Sometimes a Plan may include assistance in entering self-employment. If this is your desired job goal, your counselor will work with you on the completion of a business plan. The counselor must be able to document that you are prepared for managing a business and have the skills necessary to do the work within the business. You must have a completed, approved business plan prior to being able to write an IPE. The business plan will include information, like where the business will be located, what product or service will be made or provided, how you will keep records, how the business will be marketed and projections of expenses and income.
- **Orientation and Mobility Training.** Blind and Low Vision Services offers this direct service to individuals with significant vision impairment or blindness. The Orientation and Mobility Instructor teaches skills so the individual can safely and independently get around their home and community. Training includes techniques to orient oneself to familiar and unfamiliar environments (orientation) and techniques to navigate safely to one's destination using a variety of transportation methods (mobility). The Orientation and Mobility Instructor can also do assessments for low-vision aids and provide low-vision training.
- **Vision Rehabilitation Therapy.** This is another service unique to Blind and Low Vision Services. A Vision Rehabilitation Therapist can provide training for an individual with visual impairments on blindness-related techniques for independent living in areas like cooking, personal management, organization and care of the home, money management techniques, Braille, computer adaptations (such as screen enlargement or screen-reading programs) and medical management skills. Many of these skills are also useful in the job environment.
- **Assistive Technology Services.** Blind and Low Vision Services has an Assistive Technology Specialist who can assist with determining the best options for an individual with blindness to gain access to computers, the internet, or other technology. The Assistive Technology Specialist also provides advanced training and technical assistance on adaptive software or hardware.
- **Business Enterprise Program.** Blind and Low Vision Services offers opportunities for self-employment in operating either a cafeteria or vending route on federal and state properties. To qualify for this program, you must be: 1) a citizen of the United States, 2) legally blind (best corrected visual acuity not exceeding 20/200 or a visual field not exceeding 20 degrees), and 3) determined to be a blind person in need of vocational opportunities. If you are interested in this program, please ask your counselor for additional information.



## STEP 6 JOB PLACEMENT & SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT

When you are ready to work, VR is here to assist you with finding a job in the manner that works best for you. Some people prefer to conduct their own job searches and applications. Others may ask their counselor to help. Some of the ways that VR can help include:

- Developing resumes
- Preparing for interviews; and
- Making referrals to employers

At your request, VR can also make direct contact with employers to discuss employment-related issues. When you are working in the job you chose in your Plan, VR will keep your file open for at least 90 days. Then before closing the file, your counselor will contact you to make sure the job is satisfactory and to congratulate you. Your file will be closed as a success!

### POST EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Post employment services are available after your file is closed, if you need short-term assistance in keeping your job. Call your counselor if you think you need this service.

### HOW TO RESOLVE ISSUES & CONCERNS:

The Client Assistance Program is available to assist and advocate for you whenever you are dissatisfied with any action or inaction on the part of VR or other programs you are working with. You may request help from the Client Assistance Program at any time. Call if you have questions, concerns, or problems with your eligibility or with services you would like or are already receiving.

If you call, the Client Assistance Program will work with you to resolve your problem. Client Assistance will offer advice and provide you with help. Should it be necessary, the Client Assistance Program can also assist you with mediation or a Fair Hearing. The Client Assistance Program can be reached at:

Client Assistance Program  
 1022 Chestnut  
 Helena, Montana 59624  
 Toll free: 1-800-245-4743 (voice/ TTY)  
 (406) 449-2344  
 advocate@mtadv.org



## YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

AS A CLIENT OF MONTANA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION, YOU HAVE A NUMBER OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES. FOLLOWING IS A DESCRIPTION OF YOUR KEY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOLLOWED BY A BRIEF DISCUSSION IN SOME INSTANCES.

Your counselor can answer your questions in detail. Interpreters, translators, special materials, equipment, and other modes of communication are available to ensure your understanding.

You have the right to be treated with courtesy and respect. In return, VR asks that you extend the same courtesy and respect to our staff.

You have the responsibility for carrying out your Individualized Plan for Employment and to make reasonable efforts on your own behalf. This includes keeping appointments and attendance at scheduled activities; attaining acceptable grades/ratings at training; following medical or other professional instructions; and notifying your counselor of all changes in your situation.

### COMPLIANCE WITH THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

You have the right to services without discrimination. MVR complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Workforce Investment Act; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. Services are provided without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, or physical or mental disability. If you believe discrimination is being practiced, you have the right to register a complaint with The Human Rights Bureau, Department of Labor and Industry, 1625 11th Avenue, P.O. Box 1728, Helena, Montana 59624-1728; phone 406-444-2884.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

You have the right for your case file information to remain confidential.

To determine your eligibility for services and to plan appropriate services, you and your counselor will collect personal information about you and keep that information in your case file. This information may be medical, psychological, vocational or other information as deemed necessary by you and your counselor in order to accomplish your goals. This information is considered confidential and kept protected in your file. Because it is so important to the mutual planning for services, your counselor will need your help in collecting this information. Without your assistance, MVR may not be able to serve you.

MVR is located in the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) and funded through the State of Montana and the Federal Department of Education under the



Authority of the Workforce Investment Act; Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. MVR uses your confidential information only for the purposes of administering VR programs. We require your written permission to release your confidential information to programs, agencies and individuals not directly related to administering the MVR program. We are required to release personal information if it is in response to investigations in connection with law enforcement, fraud, or abuse and in response to judicial order. If you have any questions about our confidentiality policy or wish to read it in full, please ask your counselor.

### INFORMED CHOICE

You have both the right and responsibility to participate in the planning and development of your vocational goal and rehabilitation services. It is important that you tell your counselor about your wishes and inform him or her anytime you think your program needs changing. MVR will provide you with the means and opportunity to exercise informed choice among suitable vocational goals in terms of your unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and needs.

### YOUR RIGHT TO APPEAL

You have the right to appeal anytime you do not agree with a decision about your program. Usually the first step is to tell your counselor you do not agree with the anticipated decision. The counselor will assure you that you have the right to:

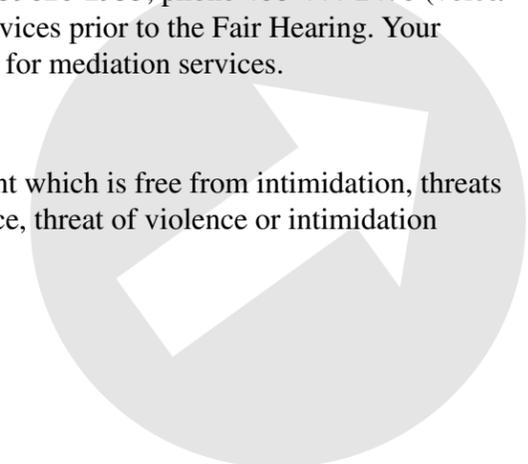
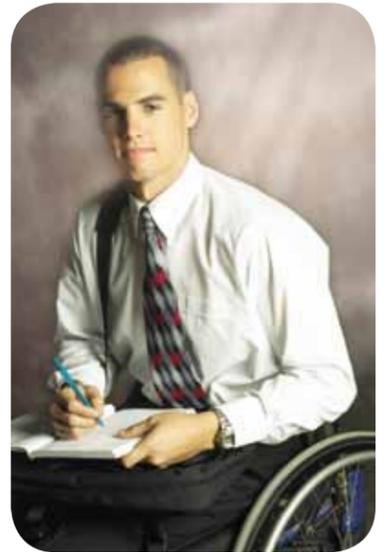
- (1) Assistance in conflict resolution;
- (2) A timely formal decision from MVR; and
- (3) Appeal.

At any time you feel you are in conflict with an anticipated action or formal decision from MVR you may request assistance from the Client Assistance Program (CAP). CAP contact information is on page 11.

To appeal a decision made by MVR you must write within 45 days of that decision to: Ms. Brigitte Erickson, The DPHHS Office of Fair Hearings, P.O. Box 202953, Helena, MT 59620-2953; phone 406-444-2470 (voice/TTY). In the course of the appeal you have the right to mediation services prior to the Fair Hearing. Your counselor can assist you with either the appeal process or the request for mediation services.

### SAFETY

You have the responsibility for and right to a safe service environment which is free from intimidation, threats or violent acts. Your counselor is required to report any act of violence, threat of violence or intimidation regardless of who initiates the incident.







# REGIONAL OFFICES

## MONTANA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

*\* Blind and Low Vision Services are located in these offices*



### REGION I - MISSOULA

**\*Missoula Regional Office  
Vocational Rehabilitation**  
2675 Palmer, Suite A  
Missoula, MT 59808-1700  
1-888-279-7528 (toll-free  
consumer line)  
(406) 329-5400 (voice/TTY)  
(406) 329-5420 (fax)

**Hamilton Vocational  
Rehabilitation Office**  
316 N 3rd, Suite 109/110  
Hamilton, MT 59840  
(406) 375-0203 (voice)  
(406) 363-7530 (fax)

**Kalispell Vocational  
Rehabilitation Office**  
121 Financial Dr, Suite B  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
1-877-296-1760 (toll-free  
consumer line)  
(406) 751-5940 (voice/TTY)  
(406) 751-5944 (fax)



### REGION II - BUTTE

**\*Butte Regional Office  
Vocational Rehabilitation**  
700 Casey Street, Suite B  
Butte, MT 59701  
1-888-279-7531 (toll-free  
consumer line)  
(406) 496-4925 (voice/TTY)  
(406) 782-8728 (fax)

### Bozeman Vocational Rehabilitation Office

220 West Lamme, Suite 1E  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
1-877-296-1759 (toll-free  
consumer line)  
(406) 587-0601  
(406) 587-7863 (fax)

### Helena Vocational Rehabilitation Office

3075 North Montana Avenue Suite  
106  
Helena, MT 59601  
1-877-296-1757 (toll-free  
consumer line)  
(406) 444-1710 (voice/TTY)  
(406) 444-9659 (fax)



### REGION III - GREAT FALLS

**\*Great Falls Regional Office  
Vocational Rehabilitation**  
201 1st St So, Suite 2  
Great Falls, MT 59405-1884  
1-888-279-7527 (toll-free  
consumer line)  
(406) 454-6060 (voice)  
(406) 454-6080 (TTY)  
(406) 454-6084 (fax)

**Havre Vocational  
Rehabilitation Office**  
48 2nd Avenue, Suite 213  
Havre, MT 59501  
1-877-296-1294 (toll-free  
consumer line)  
(406) 265-6933  
(406) 265-9271 (fax)



### REGION IV - BILLINGS

**\*Billings Regional Office  
Vocational Rehabilitation**  
2121 Rosebud Dr Ste. C  
Billings, MT 59102  
1-888-279-7532 (toll-free  
consumer line)  
(406) 248-4801 (voice)  
(406) 652-6046 (TTY)  
(406) 652-1781 (fax)  
Email: [hhsvrbillings@mt.gov](mailto:hhsvrbillings@mt.gov)

**Miles City Vocational  
Rehabilitation Office**  
114 N 7th St  
Miles City, MT 59301  
1-877-296-1198 (toll-free  
consumer line)  
(406) 232-0583 (voice/TTY)  
(406) 232-0885 (fax)  
Email: [hhsvrmilescity@mt.gov](mailto:hhsvrmilescity@mt.gov)