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## **SSI/SSDI Offset for Students Using a DVR Training Grant**

**June 2015**

### **Purpose**

To communicate to DVR staff about eliminating the use of the SSI/SSDI offset to begin fall 2015. Students who receive SSI/SSDI benefits that are beginning in fall 2015 will not be eligible for an offset payment. Students who are continuing in a post-secondary program who receive SSI/SSDI benefits will continue to receive the offset payment until they complete their program or stop attending a program that provides financial aid.

### **Rationale/Why**

DVR has established a fee schedule and a means test related to participation in financial aid eligible programs in post-secondary schools. If a VR program requires the financial participation of an individual, it must have written policies governing this financial participation and that:

- (iv) The policies must ensure that the level of an individual's participation in the cost of vocational rehabilitation services is—
  - (A) Reasonable;
  - (B) Based on the individual's financial need, including consideration of any disability-related expenses paid by the individual; and
  - (C) Not so high as to effectively deny the individual a necessary service.

The regulations describe a balance between reasonable costs for services and individual VR needs. As such, each individual's circumstance is to be evaluated on its own merits. Any written policies on the individual's financial participation must be applied uniformly to all individuals in similar circumstances.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration allows for a VR program to use the determination of a university financial aid office for part or all of the process of determining an individual's financial participation if they have written policies that clearly describe the process used and the role of the university financial aid office in that process.

### **What is the Change?**

Beginning in fall 2015, any DVR student beginning a program covered by Financial Aids will be required to abide by the training grant fee schedule including students that receive SSI/SSDI.

Any continuing DVR consumer who receives SSI/SSDI and is enrolled and currently attending a program covered by Financial Aids will be allowed to complete their program and will continue to receive the SSI/SSDI offset until they have completed the program. If there is an interruption in attendance, each case will be reviewed by the WDA Director and an individualized decision will be made as to if DVR will continue to provide the offset given individual circumstances or if the consumer must abide by the fee schedule.

## **Related Policy**

A DVR consumer, who is a recipient of SSI or SSDI benefits and wishes to attend post-secondary school, should participate in a benefits analysis. A benefits analysis will provide the consumer with information about how work will affect their benefits and help them to plan for their employment and projected financial future. Participation in a benefits analysis is suggested as early in the DVR process as is practical for the individual. DVR cannot require participation by the consumer in a benefits analysis; DVR staff should explain how this important assessment might help the consumer to make informed decisions about their IPE services and goals.

## **Exceptions**

If the individual feels that their financial aid determination by the university financial aid office is not accurate or is not reasonable for their circumstances, they must contact that office to request a review or reconsideration of the decision or an exception based on their circumstances.

If the individual feels that the financial participation amount determined by the DVR is not accurate or is not reasonable for their circumstances, they must contact their VR counselor to request an exception based on their circumstances.

The individual may request an exception to the fee schedule under the provisions of 34 CFR 361.50(c) (2) (ii) and/or a review of the determinations under 34 CFR 361.57 and under WDVR policies.

## **Student Requirements**

- Apply for federal financial aid as soon as allowable but no later than April 15. Applications are available at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. A paper copy can be obtained from your high school guidance office or from the financial aid office at the school, you plan to attend.
- Register for classes and give DVR a copy of their class schedule.
- Get the *DVR Training Grant - Information Form* from DVR. Sign and return the form to DVR. The signature gives permission for the financial aid office to share information with DVR. If the student is under 18, a parent or guardian must also sign the form. DVR will send the signed *DVR Training Grant - Information Form* to the financial aid office of the school. When the form has been completed, DVR will contact the student to identify the amount of the DVR Training Grant award. The consumer should always discuss the results with the DVR counselor.
- If a student changes their schedule or credit load, they must notify DVR immediately.