



AGENCY PROGRAM HANDBOOK



January 2008

Headquarters

2239 East 55th Street
Cleveland, OH 44103
(216) 431-7800

Elyria

359 Lowell Street
Elyria, Ohio 44035
(440) 322-1123

Euclid

27691 Euclid Avenue
Euclid, Ohio 44032
(216) 289-1078

West Side

13102 Triskett Road
Cleveland, Ohio 44111
(216) 476-3020

Painesville Work Evaluation

1640 West Jackson St.
Painesville, Ohio 44077
(440) 352-6271

Training Center

2235 East 55th Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44103
(216) 431-7800

Columbus

1260 North High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43201
(614) 291-0288

Painesville

1 Victoria Square, #135
Painesville, Ohio 44077
(440) 350-3651



Accredited by CARF-the Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission
State Board of Proprietary School Registration Certificate # 79-10-0671T

**Agency Program Handbook
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Agency History

Vocational Guidance Services is a private not-for-profit agency, which had its beginnings in 1890 with the Sunbeam Circle. We have been in the field of evaluation, training and job placement of disabled and disadvantaged persons since 1956. Today, a staff of more than 125 provides services to over 5,000 people each year.

Agency programs are funded through a variety of sources including; United Way Services, private foundations, federal and local government grants or contracts, as well as donations from corporations and individuals. Some programs are offered for a fee to defray expenses, which is generally paid by a third party (BVR, BWC, BSVI, etc.).

Mission Statement

The mission of Vocational Guidance Services is “*Preparing people with barriers to employment for a brighter future!*”

Vocational Guidance Services strives to offer the finest vocational training and placement services for Northeast Ohioans facing barriers to employment.

Core Values

Integrity
Quality
Efficiency
Commitment to Staff
Consumer Advocacy
Fiscal Responsibility
Teamwork
Healthy Communications
Goals Achievement
Mission Related Growth
Innovation
Continuous Improvement
Diversity
Flexibility

Commitment to Customer Service

We promise to treat every customer with dignity, respect and kindness, while uncompromisingly pursuing fulfilling job opportunities for persons with physical, mental and socio-economic barriers to employment. Our dedicated and knowledgeable staff will provide vocational rehabilitation and other supportive services tailored to the individual needs of each customer. We will explore every opportunity to expand programs and services to meet the changing workforce demands of the Greater Cleveland labor market, and better prepare our customers to meet these challenges.

Vocational Guidance Services
VGS, Inc.
Board of Directors
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Vice Chair

Lauren E. Miller

Vice Chair

Julius M. Singleton

Vice Chair – Governmental Affairs

Constance D. Harper

Vice Chair - Finance

John S. Mitchell

Secretary

Jeffery A. Ramras

President and Chief Executive Officer

Robert E. Comben, Jr.

Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer

Donald E. Carlson

Vice President - Contracts, Facilities & Operations

James C. Hudak

Vice President – Rehabilitation Services

Michael T. Latkovich

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Daniel Frate
Victor Gelb
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Joseph J. Mahovlic
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Warren L. Morris
Diane Nowak
Patrick C. O'Brien, III
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Nancy J. Parker
Frank H. Porter, Jr
Diane Roberto
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Bettyann S. Helms
David W. Swetland
Polly Bruch White

EX OFFICIO SUNBEAM BOARD PRESIDENT

Kelly Warner

Who We Serve

We serve individuals with a variety of disabilities and disadvantages including:

- People with physical disabilities
- People with mental disabilities
- People injured while working
- Recovering substance abusers
- People lacking employment
- People with economic disadvantages
- Juvenile offenders
- Younger people with economic disadvantages
- Ex-offenders
- People without homes
- People with educational disadvantages

People eligible for our programs:

- People with physical, mental or emotional disabilities
- People unemployed, under-employed or vocationally under-developed
- People referred for services by a third party
- People fourteen years of age and above
- People able to benefit from our services

2007 Program Results

- 72% of Work Evaluation consumers developed a vocational goal.
- 97% of Work Adjustment consumers successfully completed the program.
- 84% of Occupational Skills Training consumers successfully completed their training.
- 80% of consumers enrolled in Job Search Skills Training successfully completed the program.
- 87% of Personal, Social and Community Services consumers made at least a 25% improvement toward individual goals. (results reported from 2004 statistics)
- 1127 individuals achieved employment with assistance of VGS staff, 407 of those individuals were significantly disabled.
- 40% of individuals placed in 2007 earned \$8.91 or more per hour.
- 45% of those placed with significant disabilities were placed in jobs where they were eligible to receive medical benefits.

Agency Admission Procedures

Program admission is on a first-come, first-served basis. The Case Manager in each program will determine your eligibility for the program. If at any point you do not meet the eligibility requirements for further programming, you and your referring counselor will be informed of the reasons and given information about alternative services.

Facilities

Our headquarters building, located at 2239 East 55th Street in the city of Cleveland houses some of our Work Adjustment and Occupational Skills Training programs, as well as Job Coaching and Placement services. It is freeway accessible by I-490, I-77, and I-90. Public transportation is via buses 2 and 16A, which run both northbound and southbound on East 55th. The building is open from 6:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Saturday hours are scheduled as needed.

Our Training Center, opened in 2003, is located just north of the headquarters building at 2235 East 55th Street. This state-of-the-art facility is home to Work Evaluation, as well as many of our Work Adjustment and Occupational Skill Training programs. It is accessible by the same highways and buses as the headquarters. The Training Center is open 7:00 to 5:00 Monday through Friday.

The West Side facility is located at 13102 Triskett Road in the city of Cleveland. Work Evaluation, Work Adjustment, Computer/Clerical Skills Training and Placement programs are offered at this location. It is freeway accessible by I-90. Public transportation is via RTA Rapid Red Line. Bus line 70 stops at the Rapid station, which is ¼ mile from the agency. Bus lines 75X and 83 stop near the building. The building is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

In Elyria, our facility is located at 359 Lowell Street and houses Work Evaluation, Work Adjustment, Occupational Skills Training, Job Coaching and Placement services. This location is freeway accessible by I-90, I-480 and the Ohio Turnpike. Public transportation is available via Lorain Co. Transit. The building is open from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Our new Painesville site is located at 1 Victoria Square, Suite 135, in the city of Painesville. Work Evaluation, Clerical Work Adjustment and Computer Skills Training, as well as Placement services are available at this site. It is freeway accessible via Route 2 and I-90. Public transportation is available via Lake Transit. The building is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Painesville is also home to our Work Evaluation facility, located at 1640 West Jackson Street. It is freeway accessible via Route 2, I-90, and Route 20. Public transportation is available via Lake Transit. The building is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The Euclid site is located at 27691 Euclid Avenue and houses Clerical Work Adjustment and Computer Skills Training. This location is freeway accessible via Route 2 and I-90. Public Transportation is available via RTA and Lake Transit. The building is open 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

All buildings are fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Adequate handicapped and non-handicapped parking is available at each location.

Parking

All Vocational Guidance Services' parking lots are available free of charge with the exception of the Painesville Victoria Square location, in which you must pay to park. The lots at the headquarters and training center locations are under the surveillance of several cameras.

At the East 55th Street facilities, please register with the Security Guard if you have state authorization for handicapped parking.

Vocational Guidance Services is not responsible for any loss, theft, or damage to vehicles parked in any of these lots.

Supportive Services

During admissions and screening process:

Vocational Guidance Services can provide assistance during the admissions process if you need special services. Such services may include, but are not limited to, Adult Education/GED preparation, Benefits Analysis, the use of a sign language interpreter, large print documents, the use of a Closed Circuit TV, or a reader.

While participating in any program:

Ongoing assistive services may be arranged through your referring counselor after your admission to a program. These services may include those listed above as well as adaptive equipment/software or the services of a job coach.

During the time you are actively participating in a program, you may also seek assistance in obtaining supportive services from your Case Manager or Instructor. Vocational Guidance Services staff may be able to provide you with information regarding some community social services which could provide assistance in the areas of mental health counseling, clothing vouchers, hot meal programs, housing, basic entitlements, drug and alcohol support groups, and child care.

Individual Service Planning

While you are in the program you will participate in developing an individual service plan. The purpose of the plan is to help design a program that will best suit your individual needs. In the process you and your Case Manager will look at your personal history, your current interests and abilities, and your health and safety needs. The plan will identify your vocational goal, the steps necessary to reach that goal, who is responsible for putting the plan into action and what the expected outcomes are. The plan will be reviewed with you on a regular basis. It will be updated and changed as necessary, all with your input and approval.

Risk Versus Choice

Individual choice is a very important part of your programming at Vocational Guidance Services. While in programming you will be encouraged to make decisions concerning the outcome of your program. At these times the benefits, risks, and alternatives involved in your choices will be discussed with you. The final decisions, however, will be up to you.

Service Provision Agreement

This agreement is intended to state the duties and responsibilities of both the staff of Vocational Guidance Services programs and the participants in these programs. This opportunity is to be treated as a real work situation by the participants and program staff. It is expected that both parties will strive to fulfill the duties and responsibilities outlined below:

Duties of the program staff

The primary responsibility of the staff is to prepare and assist you in attaining all skills listed in your particular program plan.

The specific responsibilities of the staff are:

- To treat participants with dignity, respect and full recognition of their physical and mental abilities
- To present and explain all program information and material
- To monitor, record, and evaluate individual progress, behavior and attitude as set by program guidelines, i.e. absences, tardiness, fairly and impartially
- To assist in filling out program documents as necessary
- To assist in developing individual service goals
- To create a realistic work environment while providing appropriate program accommodations that help you to achieve your service goals
- To disclose any potential conflict of interest that may interfere with the smooth delivery of services
- To be available and open to discuss and resolve any concerns involving your program, including health and safety related issues.
- To abide by Vocational Guidance Services' Code of Ethics (Code of Ethics available upon request)

Duties of the participant (you)

The primary duty of the participant (you) is to achieve competency in all areas of the program.

The specific responsibilities of the participant are:

- To be prepared and motivated to participate fully in the program
- To treat this program as a job
- To be open to discussion about concerns involving your program
- To actively participate in all areas of the program including goal setting, completion of assignments, life skills classes, and evaluation of your performance
- To protect all equipment from damage by keeping all liquids and food items away from it
- To abide by all Agency rules and regulations as outlined by the staff
- To treat others (staff and co-workers) with courtesy and respect
- To have fun, relax and enjoy the fact that you are moving towards a new career

The staff of Vocational Guidance Services hereby agrees to provide all necessary services essential to the attainment of your program goals.

Release of Information

Every participant in a Rehabilitation Services Program at Vocational Guidance Services will sign an Information and Records Release form. This form authorizes Vocational Guidance Services to release information regarding your participation in programming. When you sign this release you allow Vocational Guidance Services to give your name, address, social security number, initial progress and final reports from all services provided you, the date you attended program(s), and the amount of income you may have earned in the program(s).

This form allows you to choose those agencies to which information may be released. The following agencies are listed on the form: The Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission, including the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired, the Veteran's Administration, the Bureau of Workers' Compensation, County Department of Human Services, Cuyahoga Work and Training, including but not limited to: Cuyahoga, Lake, and Geauga and Lorain Counties, Social Security Administration, Employment related internet sites, any other person or agency who paid for your services at Vocational Guidance Services, and prospective employers. Information will not be given to agencies you do not indicate on the form. This release is good for only one year. ADA prevents the agency from releasing information to employers about any disability.

Access to Records

Vocational Guidance Services maintains records on every program participant. This file includes such information as applications, resumes, records of programs completed, referral information, and evaluations of program performance.

Participant files are the property of Vocational Guidance Services, and access to the information they contain is restricted. Generally only Case Managers, Instructors or Program Managers of Vocational Guidance Services who have a legitimate reason to review the information in a file are allowed to do so.

In our effort to maintain the confidentiality of participant files, only those staff working directly with the participant will have access to this information. These staff will be authorized to release information to those agencies listed above with your signed permission.

Participants who wish to review their own file should contact the Case Manager or Instructor. With reasonable advance notice, participants may review their own program records in Vocational Guidance Services' offices and in the presence of an individual appointed by Vocational Guidance Services to maintain the records.

General Information and Safety

Identification

When you enroll in a program at any location, you may be given an identification badge. Please make sure that you have this each day you are here. At those locations where there is a security guard on duty you will be requested to show it upon entering the building. All staff will wear photo identification badges at all times in all facilities.

Medicine

Staff will not administer **ANY** medicine for **ANY** reason, aspirin included.

Telephone Use/ Cell Phone Use

The use of a public telephone is available during breaks and lunch. If an emergency situation demands, you may ask your Case Manager or Instructor to use an agency phone.

If you have a cell phone, also limit its use to break or lunch times. During programming turn your cell phone off or silence the ring.

Loitering

While you are participating in programs at Vocational Guidance Services you should not wander into or loiter in unauthorized areas of the building. Office and other work areas are off limits unless you are accompanied by a staff member. You may leave the program area during scheduled breaks only, and are expected to return at the scheduled time.

Property Use

You are expected to use care and consideration when using equipment and other materials. Please treat equipment kindly. The removal of equipment and training materials from the premises is strictly prohibited and will constitute theft. In accordance with customary and acceptable standards in the workplace, termination and/or prosecution will result.

Injury

If you are injured while attending the program, you must report it to your Case Manager, Instructor, or Site Supervisor as soon as possible. If no one is available, you have 24 hours to report any incident or injury to your Case Manager, Instructor, or Site Supervisor. You will be asked to fill out an Incident Report. Your Case Manager, Instructor or Site Supervisor can assist you with the report if necessary. If medical attention is required as a result of injury, VGS will help arrange for that care.

Safety

You are expected to conduct yourself in a responsible manner. Please keep your safety in mind as well as for those around you.

Obey all safety rules. They are for your benefit and that of your fellow workers.

Do not wear open toe or open heel shoes to work. It is required that you wear appropriate shoes. If you do not, you will be sent home.

Wear all safety equipment that is issued to you – safety glasses, masks, earplugs, gloves, etc.

Observe all safety signs throughout the building.

Respect the right-of-way of the tow motors and lift trucks

Do not operate any machinery without permission and supervision. In the Elyria office this includes the freight elevator.

Please report all unsafe conditions to your Supervisor.

Practice drills are held for threatening situations such as fire and weather emergencies at regular intervals. **Treat all drills as actual emergencies. Move quickly and quietly to the designated area.** Your Case Manager, Instructor or Site Supervisor will explain procedures for evacuation and point out Emergency Exits and Fire Extinguishers to you during your orientation to the program.

No dangerous weapons, such as guns, knives, chains, etc. are permitted on Vocational Guidance Services' property. If weapons are found in your possession, you will be asked to leave the building. If you refuse, local police will be called. This is also grounds for immediate termination from your program.

You may be informed of other safety rules during your program depending on the type of work you are doing.

Smoking

Tobacco use is not permitted in or on any property owned or leased by Vocational Guidance Services.

Borrowing or Lending of Money

Borrowing or lending money among program participants or staff is strictly prohibited.

Child Care

It is recommended that you arrange care for your children yourself. If you would like information on this or a referral to other programs or agencies throughout the Cleveland area, please inform your Case Manager or Instructor.

Children may not accompany participants in any program area. Again, if a situation arises regarding child-care, please consult your Case Manager or Instructor.

Dress Code

Proper dress codes are enforced; please refer to individual program handbooks for details.

Transportation

It is your responsibility to arrange for reliable transportation to and from the training center. In emergency situations your Case Manager can assist you in making the necessary arrangements.

Future Contact

Upon entry into services with Vocational Guidance Services you will be asked to sign a form giving VGS permission to contact you once you leave our services by telephone or mail to obtain information as to your employment status or satisfaction with our services. It is not necessary that you give us permission to contact you but it may be helpful in allowing us to design better services and service delivery for the future

2008 Holiday Schedule

Vocational Guidance Services will be closed on the dates listed below. No programs will be provided on these days.

January 1, 2008	New Year's Day
January 21, 2008	Martin Luther King Day
February 18, 2008	President's Day
May 26, 2008	Memorial Day
July 4, 2008	Independence Day
September 1, 2008	Labor Day
November 27, 2008	Thanksgiving
December 24, 2008	Christmas Eve
December 25, 2008	Christmas Day

Attendance

Please keep in mind that every absence will be recorded regardless of reason and reported along with your progress in this program.

Attendance and punctuality are very important components of your program at Vocational Guidance Services. It is ideal that you attend the program every day and are absent only in the event of an emergency. The attendance requirements for your rehabilitation program are listed in the handbook section relating to that program.

Tardiness and Leaving Early

Tardiness is defined as arriving after the scheduled starting time for programming. Leaving early is defined as leaving before the scheduled close of programming. Both of these attendance issues will be reported as part of a review of your progress in the program you are participating in.

Necessary Appointments

The program schedules have been designed to accommodate appointments; however, we understand that you may not be able to schedule all appointments around your program. These appointments might include those with the Department of Human Services, Parole Authority/Court Dates, and doctors/clinics. You are required to provide advance, written notice of the appointment, along with written verification that the appointment was kept. Advance notice and written verification are not optional, they are mandatory.

Participants with recurring appointments, which cannot be rescheduled, must inform their Case Manager or Instructor of the dates and times of these appointments prior to starting the program. A special attendance agreement may be required in order to assure that you receive adequate time to complete all assigned work as well as meet the number of hours required for completion. All special attendance agreements will be executed only with the approval of the Program Manager or Department Supervisor.

Sick Days

Participants unable to attend the program due to illness must notify the Case Manager or Instructor prior to the start of programming that day. You must call in each day you are absent. When you have been seen by a doctor you are required to provide verification of this visit as well as the physician's "return to work/school" release form if you have been absent for three (3) or more days.

Illness During Session

If a Case Manager or Instructor is nearby and you are able to notify them that you are feeling ill, do so. Otherwise, quietly excuse yourself. Take a minute to get a drink of water, relax, or do whatever necessary to enable you to complete the rest of the day. If you are too ill to stay for the remainder of the day, you **must** inform the Case Manger, Instructor or other staff member. If the illness is serious, we may recommend that you see your doctor or go to a clinic. In the case of medical emergencies, you will be taken to the hospital via emergency ambulance.

Illness in Family/Death in Family

You are required to notify the Case Manager or Instructor and provide written verification, if requested.

Interruption of Services or Leave of Absence

In the event that you need to take a significant number of days off from your program due to illness, personal crisis, or extenuating circumstances, the Case Manager or Instructor recommend a period of interruption. All interruptions are offered at the discretion of the Program Manager or Department Supervisor. The decision to make a period of interruption available will be made on an individual basis, with particular attention given to the reasons and how they relate to work readiness. Interruptions from program will not exceed four (4) weeks.

Upon returning from a period of interruption granted for medical reasons, a "return to work/school" release form from your physician is required prior to your re-entry.

Should you require more than four (4) weeks off, you will be required to start the program over on the first available start date. The scheduling of this return will be coordinated with the Case Manger or Instructor.

Probation

You may be placed on probation or a behavior contract if your behavior and/or performance warrants. However, probation will not be your first indication that there is a problem -- you will receive a verbal warning accompanied by a signed statement of receipt. If you do not correct the behavior following a verbal warning, a written probation process will be initiated.

Verbal warning and probation may result because of:

- Problem attitude during programming--hostile, argumentative, belligerent, disruptive behavior.
- Attendance--below the accepted standard for your program including tardiness and leaving early
- Performance--failure to follow the program outline or plan in completing assignments in a timely manner with an acceptable rating
- Chronic inappropriate dress--attire not in accordance with the needs of program and/or employment
- Intoxication and/or drug use
- Misuse of agency property (depending on the cost of repair, participant may be placed on probation, interrupted, or terminated).
- Disorderly conduct including playing practical jokes, running in the building, shoving, or throwing things.

The Case Manager or Instructor is responsible for initiating procedures to implement written probation. The duration of probation shall be a maximum of four (4) weeks. Use of probation is based on what you have done, are doing, and will do warranting consideration, not on promises made on future actions.

Termination

Termination may result from failure to correct problems, which led to probationary status. Physical violence, threatening behavior, theft, robbery, use of or selling of alcohol/drugs on the premises, possession of dangerous weapons on the premises and any behavior which may endanger other participants, visitors or staff **will result in immediate termination**. This policy refers specifically to any acts committed during the program day, including breaks and lunch. As with probation, the Case Manager or Instructor is responsible for initiating the termination procedure. The final decision regarding termination is the responsibility of the Program Manager or Department Supervisor.

Program participants terminated by Vocational Guidance Services for reasons of violence, theft, robbery, use of or selling of alcohol/drugs on the premises or any behavior, which may have endangered other participants, visitors, or staff are not eligible for re-entry.

Self-Termination

You may choose to end your program at any time. It is strongly recommended that you consult with your Case Manager or Instructor and referring counselor prior to making a final decision. Your referring counselor may request that your program end at any time. This decision will be based on your agreement and training plan developed with your referring counselor. Depending on the program length, the number of weeks you actively participated, and the reason you end your program, you may be eligible for re-entry. A decision on your re-entering a program will be made in consultation with your referring counselor, Case Manager and Program Manager or Department Supervisor.

Affirmative Action

Vocational Guidance Services is guided by an Affirmative Action Program to assist in realizing equal opportunity goals. Through this program, equal opportunity is assured to all applicants, participants, and employees in all matters relating to recruitment, hiring, training, promotion, salaries, and other compensation, transfer, layoff, and termination without regard to race, color, religion, sexuality, gender, age, national origin, political affiliation, belief, or disability. Overall responsibility for our Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Programs is vested in the President of the organization.

Unlawful Harassment, Sexual and Other

Vocational Guidance Services is committed to providing a work environment that is free of discrimination and unlawful harassment. Actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's sex, race, ethnicity, age, religion, or any other legally protected characteristics will not be tolerated. As an example, sexual harassment (both overt and subtle) is a form of misconduct that is demeaning to another person, undermines the integrity of the rehabilitation service relationship, and is strictly prohibited.

Any participant who wants to report an incident of sexual or other unlawful harassment should promptly report this to their Case Manager or Instructor. If the Case Manager or Instructor is unavailable or the participant believes it would be inappropriate to contact that person, the participant should immediately contact the Program Manager or Department Supervisor.

Once an incident of harassment has been reported the following steps shall be followed: 1) The informed staff person will help the offended party to consider an informal resolution. 2) If necessary the informed staff member will address the issue with the offending party. 3) If necessary a formal written complaint will be filed with the Department Manager and a formal investigation will be conducted. 4) Results of the investigation may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program.

At each step of the process written documentation must be prepared and copies sent to the Division Director as well as the Affirmative Action Officer.

Substance Abuse Awareness

Vocational Guidance Services is guided by a Substance Abuse and Drug Testing Policy regarding the use, possession, or sale of alcohol or drugs. It is Vocational Guidance Services' desire to provide a drug-free, healthful, and safe workplace. To promote this goal, program participants are required to report to a program in appropriate mental and physical condition to engage in program activities in a satisfactory manner.

Using or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol while participating in a program may pose serious safety and health risks. Sale or use of drugs or alcohol on the premises is prohibited and cause for immediate termination from programming. Participants may be asked to provide body substance samples to determine the illicit or illegal use of drugs or alcohol.

Further information regarding the Agency Substance Abuse and Drug Testing Policy is available in the Vocational Guidance Services Personnel Policies.

Criminal Record and Probation

If you have been convicted of a crime and are currently on probation, you are expected to notify your Probation Officer that you are participating in a program at Vocational Guidance Services. You also need to inform program staff at Vocational Guidance Services of this as well as provide the name and phone number of your Probation Officer.

On Vocational Guidance Services' Information and Records Release form, you will be asked to identify your Probation Officer as one of the persons to whom Vocational Guidance Services can release information regarding your participation in programming at Vocational Guidance Services. In this way, services can be coordinated and problems avoided.

****Should Vocational Guidance Services be contacted by the criminal justice system (courts, parole officers, police, etc.) about any particular participant's progress in a program or about their criminal history, we are obligated to cooperate by providing information to the criminal justice system.**

**Ohio Consumer Assistance Program
Fact Sheet
Governor's Office for People with Disabilities**

The Consumer Assistance Program was created by the federal government to ensure the rights of consumers/applicants of programs funded under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

In Ohio, these include the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR), the Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired (BSVI), Independent Living Centers (ILC), and all other programs administered by the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission.

Vocational rehabilitation programs help persons with disabilities to go to work; return to work, or to live more independently.

In Ohio, the Consumer Assistance Program is a function of the Governor's Office of Advocacy for People with Disabilities. The Program operates under a "consumer driven" philosophy assisting people with disabilities in obtaining the vocational rehabilitation services they need.

The Ohio Consumer Assistance Program can:

- Inform you of your rights and responsibilities according to the Rehabilitation Act
- Advise you on securing the services you need
- Negotiate on your behalf in situations where services are denied or delayed
- Represent you if you wish to appeal a decision regarding your vocational rehabilitation program

The Consumer Assistance Program exists to provide information and advocacy assistance so that you get the vocational rehabilitation services for which you are eligible.

For more information, call toll-free in Ohio **1-800-282-9181**, or in Columbus call **466-7264**. Both numbers are voice or TTY. Or you may write:

Ohio Consumer Assistance Program
8 East Long Street, 5th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Fair Treatment Policy

If you feel that you have been treated unfairly In the course of receiving services, the Fair Treatment Policy explains the steps you can take to file an official grievance, to resolve that grievance or to appeal a decision. It will be your responsibility to initiate this process by following the policy outlined below. The process can be ended at any time an agreement is reached or any time you decide not to pursue the appeal to the next level. Please be assured that filing a grievance will not result in retaliation against you or cause a barrier to you receiving services.

1. Inform your Case Manager or Instructor of your concerns. Set an appointment to discuss your concerns in detail. If an agreement is reached during this meeting the person you are meeting with will simply document the meeting and enter it into your case file. If you are not satisfied after the meeting you may move forward by following step two of the policy.
2. Inform your Case Manager or Instructor that you wish to file a grievance. You will need to fill out a grievance form, a written statement of your concerns (your Case Manager or Instructor will provide you with the proper form). The Case Manager or Instructor will make an appointment for you with their Department Supervisor within five business days after the receipt of the written statement of your concerns. Within five business days of this meeting a written statement will be prepared for you, your case file, and the annual review of grievances file stating the results of the meeting. If you are not pleased with the results of this meeting you may continue the process with step three.
3. Within 24 hours inform the Department Supervisor that you wish to continue, or appeal the results of the last meeting. The Department Supervisor will make an appointment for you with the Vice President within five business days after the receipt of the written statement of your concerns. You must provide written documentation of your concerns to the Vice President using a grievance form. You can use your original grievance form or fill out a new form if you have additional concerns as a result of the meetings you have participated in. Written documentation from your meetings with other staff members on this concern will also be provided to the Vice President. Within five business days of this meeting you will be provided with a written statement of the Vice President's decision. The decision of the Vice President or Director is final. A copy of the documentation will also be kept in your case file and sent to Laura Lamb for the Annual Review of Grievances File.
4. On an annual basis all grievances will be reviewed to reveal trends and to develop plans for improvement in needed areas.

Do not hesitate to request assistance in completing the necessary paperwork or in obtaining a third party advocate to help you through this process.

Glossary of Terms

ADA – American with Disabilities Act – Federal law which prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment situations.

Advocacy – The process of giving support for a cause. A person can be their own advocate by speaking up for themselves or they can get another person, an advocate, to help support their cause.

BSVI – Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired – Serves people with visual impairments.

BVR – Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation – Provides vocational services to persons with disabilities.

BWC – Bureau of Workers' Compensation- provides services to workers injured on the job.

CCBMR/DD – Cuyahoga County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities – Provides services to persons who are moderately, severely, and profoundly retarded or developmentally disabled and their families.

Case Manager – The person at Vocational Guidance Services who is responsible for the management of your services.

Critical Job Keeping Behaviors – Attendance, Punctuality, Productivity, Work Quality, On-Task Behavior, Accepting Authority, Work Appropriate Appearance.

Consumer – a person receiving services at Vocational Guidance Services.

DOL – Department of Labor – Vocational Guidance Services follows the rules and regulations set by the Department of Labor to protect workers in the workplace.

Individual Service Plan – A plan determined by you and your Case Manager, which states your vocational goal and the steps to help you reach that goal.

Instructor – The person who is responsible for teaching you a particular skill.

NISH – National Industries for the Severely Handicapped – Some of the work done at VGS is provided under a contract with NISH.

ORSC – Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission – Works in partnership with persons with disabilities to achieve full community participation.

Referring Counselor – The counselor from the agency that is paying for your services at VGS.

Referral Source – An agency separate from Vocational Guidance Services that is paying for your services at VGS.

SSA – Social Security Administration – Provides income and medical benefits to eligible persons.

SSI – Social Security Income – Available to eligible persons without a work history.

SSDI – Social Security Disability Income – Available to eligible persons with a work history.

Staffing – A meeting held between you, your VGS Case Manager, your Referring Counselor, and any other interested parties that you chose to invite in order to review you progress and determine the next steps in you program.

TANF- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families - Can provide funding for services for residents of the City of Cleveland or Cuyahoga County. Based on income eligibility.

Ticket-to-Work – A program offered to recipients of SSI or SSDI which allows greater choice in selecting a service provider to help individuals become employed.

VA – Veteran’s Administration – Provides services to persons with history of military service.

VGS – Vocational Guidance Services – A Not-For-Profit agency whose mission is to prepare people with barriers to employment for a brighter future.

WIA – Workforce Investment Act – Can provide funding for services for residents of the City of Cleveland or Cuyahoga County. Based on income eligibility.

Program Descriptions

Adult Basic Education – Offered through Project LEARN, a service to help you improve reading or math skills or to help you prepare for the GED test.

Basic Life Skills – Program to offer individuals with severe and profound mental retardation opportunities for daily activities that optimize personal, social, and community skills.

Benefits Analysis – Program to promote self-advocacy and provide information related to government subsidies and the effect of returning to work on these entitlements.

Community Based Work Adjustment – Program to help you develop appropriate critical job keeping behaviors while on a job site in the community.

Company Based Work Experience – An opportunity for you to gain work experience in the community.

Job Coaching – Program to provide you with support while on the job.

JSST – Job Search Skills Training – Program to teach you the skills of interviewing, completing applications, developing a resume, etc.

Occupational Skills Training – Program to teach you specific work skills, e.g. clerical, custodial, maintenance, sewing.

Personal Social and Community Services - Program offered to develop appropriate personal and interpersonal behaviors needed for positive social interaction as well as increased opportunities for community involvement.

Placement – Program to assist you in finding a job.

Transitional Jobs – Program to move welfare recipients off dependence by providing a bridge from assistance to gainful employment. Three weeks of preparation are included prior to transitional job assignments which may last up to 6 months. Following the conclusion of transitional job assignment you receive placement assistance.

Work Adjustment – Program to help you develop appropriate critical job-keeping behaviors.

Work Evaluation – Program to evaluate strengths, limitations and help you determine a vocational goal.