



RETAINWORKS 2026 ECHO:

A Health Navigation Model for
Supporting Employment

Thursdays, March 5 - April 30 | Noon - 1 PM CST

**RETAIN
WORKS** | Retaining
Employment
and Talent After
Injury/Illness
Network



March 19, 2026



Vocational Rehabilitation Services

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the core principles of vocational rehabilitation
2. Explain eligibility and referral process for vocational rehabilitation
3. Discuss services provided in vocational rehabilitation

OUR MISSION:

To protect children, strengthen families
and promote adult self-sufficiency.

WHAT WE BELIEVE:



PEOPLE HAVE THE CAPACITY:

- To progress
- To succeed
- To grow
- To do well in life



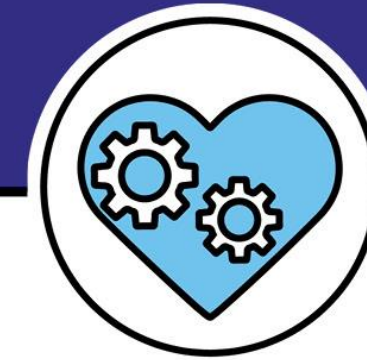
PEOPLE ARE THE EXPERTS ON THEIR LIVES AND HAVE:

- Voices
- Choices
- Needs
- Strengths
- Life Stories



WE VALUE COMMUNITIES AND THE PEOPLE THAT MAKE THEM UNIQUE:

- We honor the whole person
- We rely on each other
- We are partners, not competitors
- We all benefit from a collective impact approach
- Communities bring strength through relationships and resources



WE LEAD WITH AUTHENTICITY, CURIOSITY, AND RESPECT:

- We are innovative
- We are inclusive
- We are experts
- We are leaders
- We are authentic
- We are diverse
- We care about each other, our work and the people we serve
- We share success stories

Introduction

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

Program of the Rehabilitation Services (RS) Division within the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF)

- Mission: *Working in partnership with Kansas with disabilities to achieve their goals for employment, independence, and self-sufficiency.*
- Vocational rehabilitation services is a **comprehensive support system** for individuals with disabilities, helping them overcome barriers to employment, by providing services to help prepare for, enter, and maintenance competitive employment.
- VR programs aim to empower individuals to achieve meaningful and sustainable employment outcomes.

The Rehabilitation Act

VR is authorized through the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014).

The purpose of this program is to empower persons with disabilities to maximize:

- Employment
- Economic self-sufficiency
- Independence
- Inclusion and integration into society



Work is a Valued Activity (Health Outcome)

- Working gave me a “sense of accomplishment and self-pride.”
- I felt “a purpose,” “joy,” and the “confidence to learn new things.”
- Work gives people the opportunity to choose their own path.
- Work gives hope to be part of the world.
- Promotes Independence and enhances self-esteem

Source: *“Because I work: A Phenomenological Inquiry of People with Disabilities;”* Patricia Yeager, MS, Michael Donnelly, BS, Jana Copeland, PhD, Rocky Mountain Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center; 2009

VR Core Principles

- Community-based services and competitive, integrated employment outcomes are emphasized.
- VR counselors work in partnership with clients to help them assess their skills and interests, to develop Individual Plans for Employment (IPE), and to provide or purchase needed services.
- VR counselors prioritize maximizing employment and training opportunities.
- Services are individualized according to each person's strengths, interests, abilities, capabilities, resources, priorities, concerns, and informed choice.

Referrals to VR are Encouraged

- Individuals who have temporary health conditions, such as broken limbs or pregnancy, are not eligible for VR services on the basis of those conditions alone.
- VR is not a source for emergency medical or medical insurance coverage.
- VR works with Individuals with all types of disabilities.

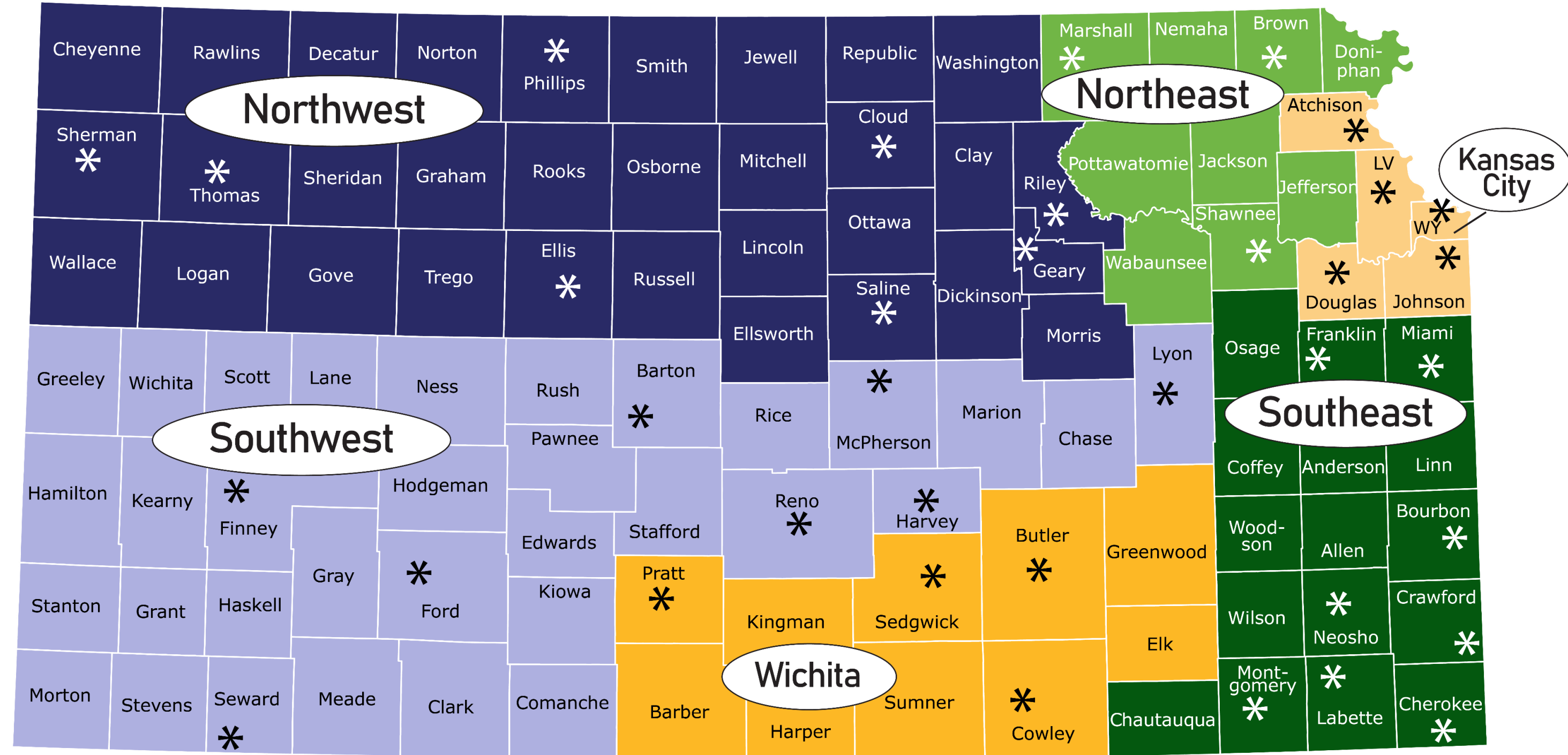


Referrals to VR are Encouraged

- VR is a rehab program that focuses on employment.
- Individuals who participate are expected to become employed as a result of services.
- Individuals must be available to pursue employment.
- Persons referred and applicants may be unemployed, underemployed or in need of services to maintain or advance in employment.



DCF Regions

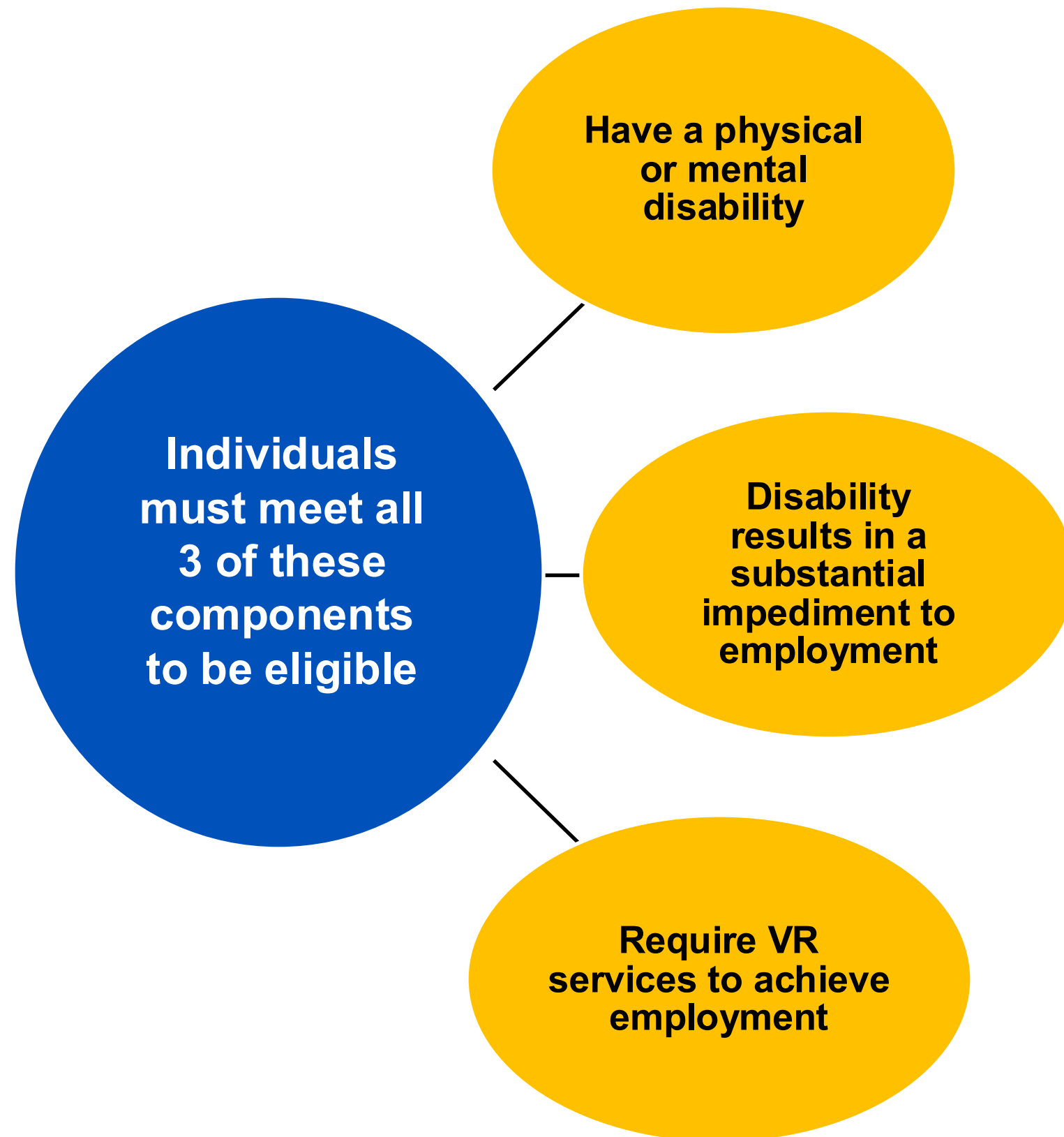


* DCF Service Center

The VR Service Delivery System

- Application (30 days)
- Eligibility Determination (60 Days)
- Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) (90 Days)
- Service Delivery (average 18 months)
- Employment
- Follow up and support (90 + days in employment)
- Most VR services are free to eligible individuals.

Eligibility



This information is then analyzed by the Counselor to determine if an individual is eligible for services.

Presumed eligible if receiving SSI/SSDI and capable of employment.

Individual Plan of Employment

After eligibility is determined:

- **Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE):** This is a plan of action that describes the steps and services a consumer will need to reach his or her employment goal.
- **First Step:** is to identify what kind of job the client wants to get, and how soon he or she will be able to begin working. The biggest service that we have to offer is counseling and guidance.
- **Partners:** State agencies, Educational Institutions, community partnerships, Business and industry, etc...

Possible Services Provided

- **Assessment and counseling** to determine vocational needs and employment goals
- **Job training and education**, including on-the-job training or vocational courses
- **Job placement and development**, including assistance with finding & applying for jobs
- **Job coaching**: Training on the job site.
- **Physical or mental restoration services**: prothesis device, hearing aids, wheelchairs
- **Support services**, such as transportation, interpreter services, or personal assistance
- **Rehabilitation technology and devices** to improve work performance
- **Transition services** for students preparing to move from school to work
- **Supported Employment** for individuals with significant disabilities who need ongoing assistance.

The services are designed to help individuals **get ready for a job, find a job, keep a job, advance in a job, or regain employment** after an injury or disability.

Role of the Rehabilitation Counselor

- During the plan, the Counselor will meet with the individual from time to time to talk about progress, to make sure the plan is still working, and to discuss anything important for success.
- Always remember that success in the VR system depends upon the client's relationship with the Counselor. Trust, open communication, a shared belief in their ability to work, and mutual respect are very important. The Counselor is there to help the client understand their disability and identify ways to gather the supports, skills, information, and opportunities they need to reach their desired level of integration, participation, and employment in the community of their choice.