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# Fast Facts

PreETS.org — Virginia's Collaborative Model for Pre-Employment Transition Services

## DARS Continuum of Transition Services

Virginia's Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) provides a continuum of services and supports that may be available for students with disabilities as they move from high school to post-secondary opportunities. Under the umbrella of DARS Transition Services are pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) and vocational rehabilitation services (VR).

### Pre-ETS

Students can start receiving Pre-ETS as early as 14. These services are the result of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA). This act requires state VR agencies to set aside funding for Pre-ETS, which are the earliest set of services provided by DARS. To qualify, students must be age 14-21, have a disability (IEP, 504, or other documented disability), and have a signed consent form.

Pre-ETS include basic employment knowledge that everyone needs to know for the future. There are five service categories of Pre-ETS intended to address students' needs while they are in school. The categories are:

- Job Exploration Counseling
- Workplace Readiness Training
- Counseling on Educational & Training Options
- Work-Based Learning Experiences
- Instruction in Self-Advocacy

Pre-ETS lessons and activities are developed and implemented collaboratively between schools, families, and DARS. While DARS counselors are experts in employment services, Pre-ETS are a team effort. Families and guardians know students best and can reinforce lessons at home. School staff can help with planning services and sharing student support needs. This is important as the intent of WIOA was for DARS and school services to complement, not duplicate, each other.

Pre-ETS are often offered in schools, either in groups or individually, if needed. The level of service varies. Some students might need all categories, while others may need only one or two.

### Benefits of Pre-ETS

Pre-ETS offer several benefits.

- Students gain early access to DARS counselors and resources, which is crucial for those needing extra help.
- Services help students explore interests and refine goals.
- Collaboration between schools and DARS provides insights for IEP teams.
- Pre-ETS data helps determine the need for VR services.

# VR Services

VR services provided by DARS assist students and adults with disabilities in finding and maintaining employment. VR services are more complex and individualized than Pre-ETS. To receive VR services, individuals meet with a DARS counselor, apply for services, and submit required records so that DARS can determine eligibility.

Following eligibility, individuals work with an assigned DARS counselor. Together, they set career goals, determine service needs to reach those goals, and develop an Individualized Employment Plan. Services vary based on individual need. Some services like counseling guidance and planning are free to anyone eligible for VR. Other VR services consider the person's resources and need for financial support. Depending on the individual's financial situation, DARS may be able to pay for what an individual needs or ask the individual to pay for some of it.

## Starting VR Services

Starting VR services requires planning due to the lengthy process. For most students, 11th grade is ideal. Those with more challenges may want to start earlier, including students with communication needs and students with more than one disability (such as hearing impairment and learning disability).

Early planning ensures a smoother transition. It is helpful when the student's team can identify specific VR services they think the student may need. This allows for paperwork and processing time without delaying needed services.

Some specific VR services include:

- Communication devices & assistive technology
- Supported employment (job coaching)
- Support to earn a degree or credential
- Social skills training

## Conclusion

Pre-ETS and VR services differ in timing, complexity, and degree of customization. Pre-ETS start at age 14 and teach work skills. VR services begin in high school, often in 10th or 11th grade, and are individualized supports for employment. The key to these transition services is that early involvement with DARS can boost student success.

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