

## State Plan Forum: Questions and Answers

### **Question 1: How do we get the message out about OVR and awareness? Do we participate in career fairs?**

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OVR coordinates multiple outreach efforts to inform the public about the state's vocational rehabilitation programs and services.

OVR participates in state and community events, partner meetings, and visits high schools to bring awareness of vocational rehabilitation programs and services offered throughout the state. OVR provides resourceful information on the OVR website and social media platform regarding events, meetings, forums, spotlights, etc. that may be of public interest. OVR's website details the wide variety of services offered and contact information for each division so interested individuals, particularly persons with disabilities, have knowledge of and access to available resources and services.

Additionally, OVR Counselors, Job Placement Specialists, and Transition Services Branch Staff distribute outreach material and answer questions at various career fairs for people that might be interested in learning more about the services offered. On a broader scale, the agency's Annual Report is widely distributed and spotlights consumer stories and the agency's performance for community awareness and engagement and to strengthen connections with stakeholders.

While OVR finds it helpful and effective when consumers, their families and communities spread the word about our services, we continue to recognize more efforts are needed to reach the wider disability communities across Kentucky. Currently, OVR's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team has a strategic plan with a goal of increasing outreach to underserved populations. We are continuously looking at more ways to increase awareness about OVR services in accordance with the requirements in the Uniform Guidance at 2 C.F.R. 200.467.

### **Question 2: What are the changes to rules in the bioptic driving?**

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782 KAR 1:070. Relates to KRS 186.480, 186.576, 186.579, 186.577, 186.578, and 186.579.

The changes to the Kentucky Bioptic Driving Law that occurred in 2022 included updates to correctly identify the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of Blind Services as the state entity administering the Bioptic Driving Program, as opposed to the Office for the Blind.

The changes also corrected the amount of time the operator's license is effective; previously it stated that it was only effective one year and then needed renewal. It was updated to state that renewal happens at 4 to 8 years, in line with all other operator's licenses in Kentucky.

Another change was made to better reflect how our program is currently operating. It allows new drivers to take the daytime and nighttime operator's license examination on the same day, as opposed to waiting 24 hours between the exams. It also clarifies when individuals who transfer from another state, and currently hold an operator's license with a bioptic restriction must take a night or day examination.

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### **Question 3: Who to connect with in the state regarding bioptic driving?**

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Speak with an OVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in your area to get connected.

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### **Question 4: Do we have funding sources in Kentucky for Assistive Technology?**

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Yes, the Kentucky Assistive Technology Services (KATS) Network and Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation (KATLC).

[The KATS Network](https://www.katsnet.org) (<https://www.katsnet.org>) has many resources like a lending library to borrow assistive tech equipment on a short-term basis. They also have demo centers to try out technology and a system for collecting, refurbishing and redistributing assistive tech and durable medical equipment throughout the state. They can also connect you to other resources around the state through their [funding guide](https://www.katsnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/A-Guide-To-Assistive-Technology-Funding16th-Edition-2023-rev-2.pdf) (<https://www.katsnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/A-Guide-To-Assistive-Technology-Funding16th-Edition-2023-rev-2.pdf>)

KATLC is the Assistive Technology Alternative Financing Program (ATAFP) for Kentucky. KATLC provides financial loans for the purchase of assistive technology with its lending partner for individuals with disabilities or the parent or legal guardian of an individual with a disability. KATLC has joined with the Appalachian Assistive Technology Loan Fund (AATLF) to provide no interest, no fee loans from \$100-7,000 for assistive technology to promote independence and enhanced quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

KATLC is funded by both private and public monies to assist Kentuckians with disabilities to obtain low interest loans for the purchase of assistive technology that will promote their independence and enhance their quality of life. KATLC is actively working to obtain a new lending partner to provide loans over \$7,000.

### **Question 5: What is OVR currently doing to network with employers?**

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The OVR Employer Services Branch employs a statewide Employer Services Branch Manager and Job Placement Specialists across the state. With the branch manager's guidance, the job placement specialists are responsible for developing relationships with local employers to facilitate the placement of OVR consumers into competitive integrated employment. Job placement specialists utilize the targeted industry sectors, as determined by their local workforce region, in order to provide specific labor market information to consumers, employers and agency partners.

Currently, the Employer Services Branch networks with employers in the following ways:

- Staff meet with hiring managers or their representatives in person to discuss VR services and work experience programs on a consistent basis each month. This helps build relationships with decision makers and key personnel, directly.
- Every year, staff attend hiring events, such as job fairs within the state for visibility and awareness of our services and the consumers we serve.
- Staff attend monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings with various employer groups including, but not limited to, the Chamber of Commerce, Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), Networking Neighbors (a local employer group) and Neighborhood Coffee (a local employer group). In addition, staff attend the Workforce Summit that was recently held in Lexington, Ky. By attending these group meetings, staff are able to meet with new employers as well as solidifying the existing relationships with employers. This has been a great strategy for learning the employer's needs and expectations, job descriptions, potential for job carving and identifying a direct contact for employers.
- The Kentucky Career Centers (KCC) serve our consumers in multiple ways. The KCC often hold mini job fairs and employer forums with the opportunity for consumers to participate in mock interviews, all on a more personal level. Working with community partners and our staff in different regional KCC locations throughout the state have been a great asset in networking with employers.
- The VR Employer Services Branch Manager is a member of multiple employment focused councils, boards, and organizations, including Workforce Advisory Group with CareerOneStop, National Rehabilitation Association (NRA), Kentucky Rehabilitation Association (KRA), and Kentucky Job Placement Division (KJPD). The Branch Manager is also a representative for the National Employment Team (NET). This allows the Branch Manager opportunities to strategically network with employers and effectively lead staff, regionally, in engaging with employers.

The Employer Services Branch is always seeking more opportunities to engage with employers to assist our consumers in obtaining competitive integrated employment.

**Question 6:** Does VR go and do presentations for students who are in college learning how to be teachers, especially special education teachers?

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Yes. OVR has provided presentations to students in the Bachelor of Arts program for Special Education at University of Kentucky to ensure that students who will serve individuals with disabilities in the future will have knowledge of our programs and services. OVR is currently in discussion about entering the classrooms of more educational institutions within the state as well as a broader range of disciplines to bring awareness of our programs and services to students. OVR's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee has been working on strategies specifically for college and university outreach for students studying not only Special Ed., but also Social Work, Psychology, Sociology, Criminal Justice, and other human services fields.