



**BRAIN INJURY  
ASSOCIATION  
OF NEW JERSEY**

825 Georges Road, Second Floor  
North Brunswick, NJ 08902  
732.745.0200

[www.bianj.org](http://www.bianj.org)

Helpline: 1-800-669-4323

No Brain Injury is  
Too Mild to Ignore,  
or Too Severe to  
Lose Hope

## **Returning to Work after Brain Injury: Utilizing New Jersey's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

*By Judi Weinberger*

Individuals may consider returning to work soon or years after a brain injury occurs. Some are able to return to their old jobs while others have to re-evaluate their interests and capabilities in light of the limitations resulting from the brain injury. Cognitive, emotional/behavioral and/or physical issues may interfere with a smooth transition back to the workplace. Young adults may not have established a work identity at the time of the brain injury, resulting in a need to develop skills and work behaviors that may be different from their schooling.

New Jersey's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS), part of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, provides services that enable individuals with disabilities to find jobs or keep their existing jobs. An individual with a brain injury may qualify for vocational rehabilitation services if their brain injury is a substantial impediment to employment. Consider applying for DVRS services if you are interested in working and:

- You tried returning to work but were unsuccessful.
- You are currently working but having difficulty.
- You are completing medical treatment or rehabilitation and need assistance finding and keeping a job.
- You are completing school and need assistance finding and keeping a job.
- You have been living with brain injury for a while and need assistance finding and keeping a job.

DVRS has 18 local offices located throughout the state (see listing below). Contact your local DVRS office and schedule an initial appointment with a vocational rehabilitation counselor. You will be asked to bring a list of materials with you to the initial appointment called a "Survey Interview." The more information you are able to provide at this initial appointment, the faster the screening process will occur for eligibility. If available, bring medical/rehabilitation records that document the brain injury and your current functional status. To determine eligibility, the DVRS counselor may request financial information as well as have you sign release of information forms to obtain additional information.

Once an individual is found eligible for services, the person and the vocational rehabilitation counselor work together to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that is goal oriented and based on the individual's need for services that will lead to employment. Vocational rehabilitation counselors are masters-level professionals with expertise in disability and return to work issues.

As part of the IPE, the individual may be referred for services to assist in the employment process. Some of the services are at "no cost" to the individual, while others are based on the individual's ability to pay via a financial needs assessment.



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Counselors are required to consider the individual's "comparable benefits", that is, identical services available from other sources such as medical insurance. No cost services include:

Diagnostic evaluations, vocational counseling and guidance, job placement, supported employment services, on-the-job training, job coaching, and work adjustment training in a community rehabilitation program.

Services with cost may include: Expenses for medical/rehabilitation services, training, books, supplies, tools, and equipment.

Returning to work after brain injury can be a slow process, requiring the coordination of many services. Once you have applied for DVRS services, it is important to stay in close contact with your DVRS counselor. Follow up by telephone or email on a regular basis. Keep all scheduled appointments. Be open and honest about your interest in working and the specific vocational goal that has been established. If you are not satisfied with the recommended services, contact the DVRS counselor. Most importantly, discuss with the DVRS counselor how you expect the brain injury will impact your ability to work. The more information the counselor has available, the better equipped he or she will be to provide you with necessary services and supports.

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*Judi Weinberger is the Director of Family Support and Vocational Projects at the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey.*

### Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Offices

#### Northern Region

60 State St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl  
Hackensack, NJ 07601  
201-996-8970

223 Stiger St, Suite A  
Hackettstown, NJ 07840  
908-852-4110

438 Summit Ave, Suite 604  
Jersey City, NJ 07306  
201-217-7180

7 Sussex Ave, 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl  
Morristown, NJ 07960  
973-631-6304

370 Broadway  
Paterson, NJ 07501  
973-977-4285

#### Central Region

921 Elizabeth Ave, 3<sup>rd</sup> Fl  
Elizabeth, NJ 07201  
908-965-3940

60 Taylor Ave  
Neptune, NJ 07753  
732-775-1799

506 Jersey Ave, PO Box 2672  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
732-937-6300

990 Broad St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl  
Newark, NJ 07102  
973-648-3494

75 Veterans Memorial Dr  
Somerville, NJ 08876  
908-704-3030

28 Yard Ave  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
609-292-2940

#### Southern Region

215 Crown Pt Rd  
Thorofare, NJ 08086  
856-384-3730

1027 Hooper Ave, B6  
Toms River, NJ  
732-505-2310

795 Woodlane Rd  
Westampton, NJ 08060  
609-518-3956

3810 New Jersey Ave  
Wildwood, NJ 08260  
609-523-0330

40 E. Broad St, St 204  
Bridgeton, NJ 08302  
856-453-3888

2 South Main St  
Pleasantville, NJ 08232  
609-813-3933

2600 Mt Ephraim Ave  
Camden, NJ 08104  
856-614-2500