

Program Goal

To enhance the lives of American Indians with disabilities through successful employment outcomes

Vision Statement

To be a model program that sets a standard of excellence for Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation

Eligibility Requirements

- ◆ Reside within the Chickasaw Nation Service Area
- ◆ Be a member of a federally recognized tribe
- ◆ Have a documented physical or mental disability which results in a substantial impediment to employment
- ◆ Require VR services to attain or maintain suitable employment

Counties Served

- ◆ Bryan
- ◆ Carter
- ◆ Coal
- ◆ Garvin
- ◆ Grady
- ◆ Jefferson
- ◆ Johnston
- ◆ Love
- ◆ Marshall
- ◆ McClain
- ◆ Murray
- ◆ Pontotoc
- ◆ Stephens

The Team



Department Director
Michelle Wilson, M. S., CRC

VR Counselors
Jason Burns, M.S., CRC
Justin Thomas
Tony W. Gibson, B. A.
Tracey Vasquez, M. S.
Nick Buckley, B. A.
Kara Payne, B.S.
Amanda James, B. A.

Transition Specialist
Joe Stick, M. Ed.

Quality Assurance
Jim Ingram, B. S.
Bert Lynch, M. Ed.

Job Developer
Becky Floyd

Receptionist
Gwen Carney

VR Counselor Assistant
Judy Fowler, B. A.

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Application Process

- ◆ Contact the Vocational Rehabilitation Department
- ◆ A vocational rehabilitation team member will take basic referral information and either hand, mail or fax you an application packet to complete.
- ◆ A vocational rehabilitation team member will contact you to schedule an appointment with a VR Counselor for an initial interview.

Information Needed at the Initial Interview

- ◆ Proof of membership in a federally recognized tribe
- ◆ Proof of a physical or mental disability that has kept you from getting or keeping suitable employment
- ◆ Proof of residence within the Chickasaw Nation service area
- ◆ Proof of income

Job Club

Each month, a Job Club is provided which focuses on strategies for successful career searching, resume writing, interviewing skills, and much more.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is an impediment to employment?

A. When a disability keeps a person from getting or keeping gainful employment then it creates an obstacle or impediment to employment.

Q. Do all consumers of this department receive the same services?

A. No. Each consumer will work with a VR counselor to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment that will include the services he/she needs to reach the chosen employment outcome.

Q. Is alcohol/drug dependence a disability served by this department?

A. Yes, if the consumer can provide proof of successfully completing an inpatient treatment program within the previous three years and fulfill the treatment requirements set forth in departmental guidelines which includes 6 months of sobriety and attendance of weekly NA/AA meetings.

Q. Does this department pay consumers to attend school?

A. No. If the consumer and the VR counselor choose an employment goal that requires training, and *Individualized Plan for Employment* will be developed that includes services that will allow the consumer to attend training.

Success Story



Cathy Chouteau, a Chickasaw Citizen, has been interested in art and illustration since she was in high school.

Her passion for art was put in danger when, at the age of thirty-two, she was diagnosed with premature cataracts. This condition hindered her ability to perform daily activities, including caring for her children, working and drawing.

In 1998, with the assistance of the Chickasaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Department and the Chickasaw Nation Health Systems, Ms. Chouteau was able to have cataract surgery which restored much of her lost vision.

On January 5, 2010, *The Adventures of Button Broken Trail*, a book written by Dr. Leech and illustrated by Cathy Chouteau, was published.

In the future, she hopes to further her potential as an illustrator. "With much thanks to the Voc Rehab services and the Chickasaw Nation," says Ms. Chouteau, "I have my sight back and I have it set on good things."