Vocational Rehabilitation and Spasmodic Dysphonia

The effect of Spasmodic Dysphonia creates challenges in the work world. Have you been thinking about re-training for a new career; or maybe just about how to make things easier in your current career?

If you have a physician-documented diagnosis of Spasmodic Dysphonia, there may be a wide range of services offered by the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) in the state you live in. Each state has a Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. While each department's exact title and benefits may vary by state, they have similar missions.

You can contact your state DVR for more information. The general idea of how DVRs operate is provided below to help you understand the system in concept.

DVR's believe employment contributes to a person’s ability to live independently and everyone has a right to work. Their mission is to empower people with disabilities to achieve a greater quality of life by obtaining and maintaining employment. They serve people with disabilities who want to work but face a substantial barrier to finding or keeping a job.

The DVR's provide services for eligible persons with physical or mental impairments. These services are designed to enable people to prepare for, get, keep, or regain employment.

List of Disabilities

What constitutes a disability varies by state. Most states list generalities rather than specific conditions. For example, New York state specifies the disability must be medically documented; that the disability is a significant impediment to employment; that your disability prevents you from obtaining or maintaining employment and that you can benefit from rehabilitation services.

In contrast, Washington state is more specific by stating a list of limitations in regard to employment (no priority in the order stated)

- Mobility - ability to get to work from home and move around at work such as being a wheel-chair-bound quadriplegic;

- Communications – Involves areas of hearing, learning or speech. An example of speech would be people with a speech impediment who cannot communicate questions to co-workers or supervisors.

- Self care - ability to perform daily activities of living/work;

- Self direction – ability to initiate, organize and make decisions in one's one best interest at a level of allowing the individual to participate in work;
Interpersonal skills - being able to get along with others sufficiently to maintain one's position in the workplace. An example of someone with issues would be having a personality disorder that makes co-workers frightened or uncomfortable;

Work tolerance – a person must have the ability to meet demands of participating in work;

Work skills – ability to meet employer expectations for entry level workers.

Services DVRs Provide:

Most DVRs provide services of Assessment, Career Counseling, Assistive Technologies, Funding for Retraining and they work with employers on Job Placement.

Assessment services measure individual's strengths, capabilities, work skills and interests. These services assist in the selection of a job goal and the DVR services needed to reach that goal.

Career Counseling and guidance services are provided throughout the rehabilitation process to help a person make good decisions about how to reach their goals.

Assistive Technologies services assist a person with communication or doing tasks by using devices such as hearing aids, visual aids, special computer software, etc. People have the opportunity to explore with their counselor how technology might help them reach their employment potential or get a device they need to go to work.

Retraining services can provide a person with work skills needed to achieve their employment goal. Assisting with vocational education, classroom training, college or training to operate a small business may be available.

Job placement can help a person carry out their job search including assisting completion of application forms, developing a resume and practicing interview skills and identifying job leads.

Regardless of what state you reside in, some requirements appear to be universal:

◊ Your mental or physical condition must be an impediment to gainful employment

◊ Most states employ extensively trained rehabilitation counselors who work individually with people to help them identify goals and implement plans that meet their specific vocational rehabilitation needs.

◊ You must have written documentation from a medical doctor that your condition interferes with or prevents you from gainful employment

◊ There are a variety of services to help those with severe vocal issues such as
spasmodic dysphonia, to the extent that the SD prevents a person from obtaining or maintaining gainful employment. Services include retraining and/or educational benefits including tuition and books.

**Disclaimer:**
Information provided by this article is a courtesy of the National Spasmodic Dysphonia Association (NSDA). The source of this information is web sites of the State of Florida, State of New York and State of Washington. Any decision to use the services mentioned is the sole responsibility of the user and the user agrees that the NSDA is neither responsible nor liable for any claim, loss, or damage from its use.