

# IOWA DEPARTMENT FOR THE BLIND

## Draft Terms and Conditions for IDB Sponsored Post-Secondary Training Participation

Revised 3/23

The Iowa Department for the Blind looks forward to partnering with you on your academic/vocational path toward employment. This document outlines information regarding your responsibilities as a student receiving training services from IDB. You are expected to review and sign this document each academic year. Please communicate with your counselor if you have any questions regarding your responsibilities and requirements below.

### Ongoing Student Responsibilities and Requirements

- Students must maintain regular contact with their IDB counselor to assess progress and update the student's IPE to reflect any changes to educational or professional goals and services. Counselors can provide guidance regarding services, accommodations and other issues related to academic success.
- Students must meet with their VR counselors to review GPA and progress each semester. They will also review the IPE at least annually to review overall progress of the IPE.
- Students must inform their counselor regarding any changes to address, telephone number, income, vocational goal or degree plan, including dropped classes or changes to academic schedule.
- Students must inform their VR counselor if they receive notice that they are failing any course or planning to take an incomplete for any reason.
- Grades must be submitted no later than two weeks after the end of each academic semester.

### Programs

Certificate, licensure, and other non-degree seeking post-secondary programs: IDB will only sponsor students attending non-degree post-secondary training programs that will allow them to comply with state licensure and employment requirements.

Undergraduate Degree programs: IDB will only sponsor students attending accredited colleges or university programs which are identified on the student's IPE and are required for the student to reach their employment goal.

Graduate Degree programs: IDB may provide support for advanced training provided the student demonstrates previous academic success in a bachelor's degree program or scheduled completion of such a degree program prior to matriculating in the program for which the individual proposes to use the support. Student must secure acceptance by an accredited graduate program at an institution of higher education and the degree must be required for employment in the chosen career field identified on the IPE.

Advanced Study: IDB may provide support for advanced study after an eligible individual has demonstrated at least one (1) year of successful, full-time work experience between completion of an undergraduate degree and the receipt of financial support for any advanced course of study and the degree is required for advancement in employment.

## Course registration

- Students must enroll in courses that support the academic or vocational training specified on their degree plan and IPE.
- Students in certificate, licensure, and other non-degree seeking post-secondary training programs must maintain the minimum level of achievement required by the particular program.
- Students must maintain a full-time course load (e.g., 12 hours for undergraduate programs and nine hours for graduate programs at most colleges and universities) during each standard semester.
- Incoming freshmen, graduating seniors, and summer school attendees should discuss possible exceptions with their counselor.
- Any circumstances preventing a student from taking a full-time course load should be discussed with the counselor. Not being able to handle a full-time course load or wanting to improve the grade point average (GPA) by taking fewer hours are not acceptable justifications.

## Timeframes for Completion

Students are expected to complete the required course of study within the time specified by the curriculum.

- Associate degree: A two-year college program should be completed within two academic years.
- Bachelor's Degree: A four-year college program should be completed within four academic years.
- Advanced/Graduate Training: Graduate students carry an average of nine hours a semester and should complete the degree per the program's expectation.

## Academic Progress

Students must maintain satisfactory academic progress and assume responsibility for items listed on the IPE.

- Students in an associate or bachelor's degree program must maintain a Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.5, or the required GPA for a specific program.
- Students enrolled in a certificate, apprenticeship, or other post-secondary program must achieve the acceptable performance level for continued program participation.
- Graduate students are required to maintain a "B" average of a 3.0 Cumulative Grade Point Average.

IDB financial support depends on progress toward the educational goals outlined on the IPE. If the GPA falls below a 2.5 or the required GPA for specific programs, for more than two consecutive semesters, IDB support may be discontinued.

## Financial Aid

Policy: No training in an institution of higher education (university, college, community or junior college, vocational school, technical institute, hospital school or nursing or any other post-secondary education institution) may be paid for with VR funds unless maximum efforts have been made to secure grant assistance in whole or in part from other sources to pay for the training.

All students requesting financial assistance must apply for all Federal Financial Aid, including the Pell Grant, and other grants available through the state and the institution of higher education by the required deadlines:

- State of Iowa's Deadline: July 1
- Chosen School's Deadline: Students must contact their school.

Graduate students must also apply for all available scholarships, fellowships, and assistantships, including federal financial aid.

Important: Funding will not be provided if students do not apply for FAFSA by the required deadlines. This rule pertains to all students regardless of school attending, type of program, etc. We recommend completing the FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1 of the year prior to your start date. (i.e., if starting in August 2024 you should complete the FAFSA in October 2023).

## Required Documentation

Students requesting financial support for post-secondary training must provide the following documentation a minimum of two weeks prior to the start of each semester:

- FAFSA Award letter
- Student Aid Report (SAR)
- Information about any other grants received
- Course registration for the semester
- Books and supplies list before the start of the semester
- Signed copy of the Terms and Conditions for IDB Sponsored Post-Secondary Training Participation form
- Signed Release of Information to post-secondary institution

Important: Any late fees that result from the student's negligence to submit the necessary verifications in a timely manner will be the responsibility of the student.

All authorizations must be approved prior to the start of the program/semester. Therefore, students who do not submit necessary documentation prior to the start date of the semester will not be eligible to receive funding for the semester.

## Services

IDB has many services to help students succeed in post-secondary training. All services provided or purchased by IDB must be on the student's IPE.

### Tuition and fees, including room and board costs

IDB may agree to pay remaining cost of tuition, required fees, and room and board costs after financial aid, personal resources and comparable benefits have been applied.

- This does not include any optional activity or facilities fees not directly related to the student's vocational goal.
- Students wishing to acquire room or meal plans above the institution's basic or standard plan will need to pay the difference between the cost of the standard plan and their desired option.

Financial aid and comparable benefits include and are not limited to Pell grants, work study, university grants, non-merit scholarships and any merit scholarships paid directly to the school.

## **Transportation**

Students must secure and manage their own transportation. Transportation options may include using public transportation, carpooling with other students, or getting rides from family or friends. If there is no transportation available, the VR counselor can help students develop long-term transportation strategies and may provide short-term assistance. Short-term assistance is defined as no more than two round trips to and from school per academic semester.

## **Reader Service**

IDB may provide funding for students who are legally blind to receive reader services. The student must explore the availability of non-visual formats and access technology before consideration of purchasing reader services. Students are responsible to utilize reader services provided by the college as a comparable benefit. The student must inform the counselor when reader services are not available through the academic institution. If not available through the academic institution, reader services may be funded by IDB. If the counselor and student agree on the service, it must be included on the IPE.

The maximum allowable number of hours of reader services will be 75 hours per semester for full-time (12 semester hours or more) undergraduate students and 75 hours per semester for full-time (9 semester hours or more) graduate students. Reader service assistance will be prorated for students that are in school less than full-time because they have met exceptions to this rule.

Readers may be paid between minimum wage and \$10 per hour. Payment for reader service cannot be made to the client's family members, state employees, or family members of current State of Iowa employees, including work study students at state funded institutions (Board of Regents Schools).

## **Books and Supplies**

IDB may pay for books and supplies required for participation in classes. Students are required to submit a course schedule for the semester with a list of the required books two weeks prior to the start of classes so that an authorization to the college bookstore can be generated. Students are required to purchase used textbooks (current edition) when available and may not purchase items unrelated to coursework. All receipts must be provided to the VR counselor to be included in the case file.

Maximum amount for full-time students per semester for textbooks and supplies that are not included in the tuition and fees is \$600. This amount is based on information obtained from the Iowa College Aid Higher Education Data Center.

## **Tutoring Services**

Tutoring services may be needed to support the student's academic success. Tutoring resources available through the institution must be fully explored and utilized prior to IDB support. When tutoring services are not available through the institution, IDB may purchase tutoring services.

The tutoring need must be required to successfully complete a required course. Students must provide documentation to their counselor regarding the need for tutoring in a required course, such as a letter from their instructor or academic advisor regarding the student's performance in the course and the number of tutorial hours recommended to improve performance. When cost effective, IDB can negotiate for "co-pay" of tutors with the college. IDB support for tutorial service cannot exceed 4 hours per week. Counselors shall make every effort to obtain the lowest possible fee for service, not to exceed \$15 per hour. This limit may be waived, when necessary, with the approval of the Program Administrator. IDB will not allow reimbursement for travel by tutors.

Counselors must follow up with the college to confirm that tutoring is not available through the college. The Disabled Student Services Coordinator should be contacted to help identify tutors that meet the requirements of IDB and the consumer.

Tutors must provide written documentation of their expertise and ability to provide the specific tutorial services required (e.g., academic degree in the specialty area, letters of reference from responsible and knowledgeable sources). In instances where a school maintains a list of approved tutors, IDB may consider use of one of these tutors thereby waiving the requirement of documentation of the individual's credentials.

## **Comparable Benefits**

Federal law and IDB require that students use a comparable benefit or service if it is available. Comparable benefits and services are similar to services provided by IDB but are provided or paid for by another entity and can assist students throughout undergraduate or graduate training. Students can discuss their eligibility for comparable benefits and services with their counselor.

All grants or scholarships provided by any branch of government, an institution, or other public entity must be considered a comparable benefit. In some cases, monetary merit awards (scholarships) are not considered comparable benefits.

## **Authorizations and Reimbursements**

All services and reimbursements must be authorized and approved prior to the purchase of the service, or the service start date. It is the student's responsibility to keep their counselor informed about their schedule or registration, need for books and supplies, etc. IDB will not provide payment for services that were not planned, necessary and authorized prior to the purchase or start date. IDB will not authorize for the same class more than one time. Students are responsible for late fees to educational facilities.

## **Exceptions to Policy**

Occasionally, there are circumstances that may justify a need for an exception to policy. Students must communicate with their counselor about the circumstances and provide any requested documentation to prepare a request for an exception to policy. Requests for an exception to policy must be approved by the VR Program Administrator. If an exception is needed for more than one year, it must be reviewed and resubmitted annually.

## **Client Agreement**

My signature below signifies that I have reviewed these terms and conditions. I understand that the Iowa Department for the Blind reserves the right to alter these terms and conditions as requirements dictate, and that my rehabilitation program is subject to such revision if I desire continued sponsorship by IDB.

Academic Year:

College:

Date:

Student Signature: