

Chapter 1
CHAPTER 36 SERVICES:
EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL COUNSELING

- 1.01 Introduction
- 1.02 References and Resources
- 1.03 Purpose and Scope
 - a. Purpose
 - b. Scope of Service
 - 1. Adjustment Counseling
 - 2. Educational Counseling
 - 3. Vocational/Career Counseling
 - 4. Career Assessment
 - 5. Interest and Aptitude Testing
 - 6. Occupational Exploration
 - 7. Identification of Training Facilities
 - 8. Benefits Coaching
- 1.04 Eligibility for Chapter 36 Services
 - a. Servicemembers
 - b. Veterans
 - 1. Montgomery GI Bill (Chapter 30)
 - 2. Veterans Educational Assistance Program (Chapter 32)
 - 3. Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33)
 - 4. MGIB Selected Reserve (Chapter 1606)
 - 5. Reserve Educational Assistance Program (Chapter 1607)
 - c. Others
 - 1. Benefits for Certain Children of Vietnam Veterans (Chapter 18)
 - 2. Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (Chapter 35)
- 1.05 Application Process
 - a. Identifying Participants
 - 1. Yellow Ribbon Events
 - 2. VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC) Program
 - 3. Transition Assistance Program Presentations
 - 4. Coming Home to Work Program
 - b. Requesting Services
 - c. Submitting Requests
 - d. Processing Requests
 - e. Establishing a Corporate WINRS Record
 - f. Scheduling Appointment for Counseling

g. Chapter 31 Applicants in Receipt of Chapter 36 Services

1.06 Providing Chapter 36 Services

- a. Service Providers
 - 1. VRC Employed by VA
 - 2. Contract Counselors
- b. Day of the Counseling Appointment
 - 1. The Individual Attends the Counseling Appointment
 - 2. The Individual Does Not Attend the Counseling Appointment
- c. Chapter 36 Process
 - 1. Educational/Vocational Career Counseling
 - 2. Educational/Vocational Assessment
 - 3. Educational/Vocational Narrative
- d. Securing Information
- e. Limitations

1.07 Completing Chapter 36 Services

- a. Completed with Counseling
- b. Completed without Counseling

1.08 VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC) Program Procedures

- a. Comprehensive Services
- b. Limited Services

Appendix O. VA Forms

Appendix AF. VA Letters

Appendix BE. VSOC Monthly Tracking Spreadsheet

Chapter 1
CHAPTER 36 SERVICES:
EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL COUNSELING

1.01 Introduction

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program provides a wide range of educational and vocational counseling services to Servicemembers still on active duty, as well as Veterans and dependents who are eligible for one of VA's educational benefit programs. These services are designed to provide counseling and support services, help the individual choose a career goal, and/or determine the course needed to achieve the chosen goal. These services are governed by 38 United States Code (U.S.C.), Section 3697A, Educational and Vocational Counseling.

1.02 References and Resources

Laws: 38 U.S.C. 3697
 38 U.S.C. 3697A

VA Forms (VAF): VAF 28-8832, Educational/Vocational Counseling Application
 VAF 22-1990, Application for VA Education Benefits
 VAF 28-1902n, Counseling Record-Narrative Report
 (Supplemental Sheet)
 VAF 28-8606, Notes from Counseling and Next Steps

Websites: www.gibill.va.gov
 www.bls.gov/ooh
 www.occupationalinfo.org
 www.onetonline.org
 www.yellowribbon.mil
 www.vetsuccess.va.gov
 www.benefits.va.gov/tap/

1.03 Purpose and Scope

a. Purpose

The purpose of Chapter 36 services is to provide professional, educational, vocational and career counseling services to Servicemembers, Veterans and dependents so they may do the following:

- Address problems that may interfere with achieving an academic/vocational goal

- Explore their patterns of abilities, skills and interests
- Identify a career objective
- Plan the best use of VA benefitsDevelop a suitable program of education or training
- Select an educational or training facility

b. Scope of Service

Services below are designed to offer counseling and support and to facilitate decision-making when choosing an appropriate education or career goal. The participant is encouraged to develop a plan of action to reach his/her specific goals. Refer to section 1.06.c of this chapter for more information on developing a plan of action to help the individual meet his/her goals.

Professional Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) provide a variety of services through the provision of Chapter 36 services, including:

1. Adjustment Counseling

Adjustment counseling is designed to help individuals understand and overcome personal, social or behavioral problems, financial issues, and health concerns affecting educational and/or vocational situations. It is important to note that some individuals, especially students, may already have a career path and may only be in need of counseling and support services.

2. Educational Counseling

VRCs provide counseling to individuals regarding educational issues, such as course and program selection, class scheduling and registration, study habits, adjustment to post-secondary settings, academic supports such as tutoring and coordination with school support resources.

3. Vocational/Career Counseling

Vocational/career counseling is a broad term that encompasses the delivery of services that assist with the identification of a career goal that is consistent with an individual's interests, aptitudes and abilities, as well as assistance with developing the path to such goal.

4. Career Assessment

Career assessment helps Servicemembers and Veterans identify civilian careers that are similar to the occupations that they performed while in the military. In addition, these assessments identify suitable occupations that are consistent with the individual's interests, aptitudes and abilities.

5. Interest and Aptitude Testing

Interest and aptitude testing is designed to evaluate the individual's abilities, aptitudes, interests and personality characteristics to ensure that the choice of educational and/or vocational goal is suitable.

6. Occupational Exploration

Occupational exploration is a methodical process to identify employment opportunities within the individual's local labor market. This process provides the individual with specific information on the occupational opportunities, salary range, education and experience requirements, and essential functions of the chosen occupation. This information ensures the individual makes an informed decision regarding his/her choice of occupation.

7. Identification of Training Facilities

The VRC works closely with the individual to identify and compare training facilities that offer the program of training/education that the individual is interested in pursuing.

8. Benefits Coaching

Guidance and support on eligibility and the effective use of VA benefits and/or other resources to achieve education and career goals. This information ensures the individual makes an informed decision regarding his/her best education and career path. These services not only directly support educational and career choices, but indirectly support decisions related to health care, compensation, finances, and housing.

1.04 Eligibility for Chapter 36 Services

38 U.S.C. 3697A governs eligibility for Chapter 36 services. Every Veteran, Servicemember and qualifying dependent may receive Chapter 36 services as many times as requested as long as he/she is still eligible. The following is a list of persons eligible to receive Chapter 36 services:

a. Servicemembers

All Servicemembers within 180 days of anticipated discharge from active duty are eligible for Chapter 36 benefits. If the discharge date is not available at the time of application then the Veteran's stated date of anticipated discharge may be accepted.

Additionally, in accordance with CFR 21.9520, if an individual serves an aggregate of 90 days on active duty after September 10, 2001 and continues on active duty, the individual is eligible for Chapter 33 benefits and may be provided Chapter 36 benefits.

It is important to note that Servicemembers who reside Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS), in territories and possessions of the U.S. and in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico may receive Chapter 36 services, but only if the Servicemember is eligible for Chapter 33 or another VA education benefit. Contracting activities for these services are conducted in the same manner as those services provided to Veterans residing in the United States under the VetSuccess contracts. Refer to M28R.V.B.4 on guidelines for establishing and implementing contracted services.

b. Veterans

Veterans who are within one year from the date of discharge or release from active duty are eligible to receive Chapter 36 services. The discharge must be under conditions other than dishonorable.

Also, Veterans participating in the following VA education assistance programs are eligible to receive Chapter 36 services, regardless of discharge date. The one year from discharge requirement does not apply to the situations below:

1. Montgomery GI Bill (Chapter 30)

To qualify for the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB), active-duty Servicemembers enroll and pay \$100 per month for 12 months to be entitled to receive a monthly education benefit once they have completed a minimum service obligation. The MGIB provides up to 36 months of education benefits. This benefit may be used for degree and certificate programs, flight training, apprenticeship/on-the-job training and correspondence courses. Remedial, deficiency and refresher courses may be approved under certain circumstances. Generally, benefits are payable for 10 years following release from active duty. Visit www.gibill.va.gov for additional information on entitlement criteria for VA educational assistance.

2. Veterans Educational Assistance Program (Chapter 32)

Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) is available to those who entered service for the first time between January 1, 1977, and June 30, 1985. VEAP benefits can be used for degree, certificate, correspondence, apprenticeship/on-the-job training programs and vocational flight training programs. In certain circumstances, remedial, deficiency and refresher training may also be available. Benefit entitlement is up to 36 months. Generally, benefits are payable for 10 years following release from active duty. Visit www.gibill.va.gov for additional information on entitlement criteria for VA educational assistance.

3. Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33)

The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides financial support for education and housing to individuals with at least 90 days of service on or after September 10, 2001, or individuals discharged with a service-connected disability. Approved training under the Post-9/11 GI Bill includes graduate and undergraduate degrees, vocational/technical training, on-the-job training, flight training, correspondence training, licensing and national testing programs, and tutorial assistance. The program pays for tuition and fees, in addition to a monthly housing allowance and a stipend for books and supplies. Benefit entitlement is up to 36 months. Generally, benefits are payable for 15 years following release from active duty. In the event that a Veteran transfers Chapter 33 benefits to a dependent, the dependent could then apply for and receive Chapter 36 services. Visit www.gibill.va.gov for additional information on entitlement criteria for VA educational assistance.

4. MGIB Selected Reserve (Chapter 1606)

A Reservist must be actively drilling and have a six-year obligation in the Selected Reserve to be eligible for services under Chapter 1606. Approved training under this benefit includes graduate and undergraduate degrees, vocational/technical training, on-the-job or apprenticeship training, correspondence training and flight training. Benefit entitlement is up to 36 months. Entitlement to this benefit is generally contingent upon continued service in the Selected Reserve. Visit www.gibill.va.gov for additional information on entitlement criteria for VA educational assistance.

5. Reserve Educational Assistance Program (Chapter 1607)

The Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) is an educational

program that provides assistance to members of the Reserve components who are called or ordered to active service. Approved training under REAP includes graduate and undergraduate degrees, vocational/technical training, on-the-job or apprenticeship training, correspondence training and flight training. Benefit entitlement is up to 36 months. Entitlement to REAP is generally contingent upon continued service in the Reserve Components. Visit www.gibill.va.gov for additional information on entitlement criteria for VA educational assistance.

c. Others

Current beneficiaries of the following VA education assistance programs are eligible to receive Educational, Vocational and Career Counseling services:

1. Benefits for Certain Children of Vietnam Veterans (Chapter 18)

VA provides monetary allowances, vocational training and rehabilitation, education services and health care benefits to certain Korea and Vietnam Veterans' birth children who are born with spina bifida. See M28R.VII.A.3 for additional information on the implementation of Chapter 18 services.

2. Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (Chapter 35)

Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance provides education and training opportunities to eligible dependents of certain Veterans. These benefits may be used for degree and certificate programs, apprenticeship and on-the-job training. Remedial, deficiency and refresher courses may be approved under certain circumstances. The program offers up to 45 months of education benefits. The period of eligibility varies as it is based on a number of factors. For more information on Chapter 35 services, see M28R.VII.A.2.

1.05 Application Process

a. Identifying Participants

VA participates in a number of outreach programs through which possible participants of Chapter 36 services can be identified. A few of these are listed below:

1. Yellow Ribbon Events

Sponsored by the Department of Defense, Yellow Ribbon events are designed to connect Servicemembers with resources and information on health care, education/training opportunities, financial assistance and legal

benefits throughout the deployment cycle. For more information on the Yellow Ribbon program, visit www.yellowribbon.mil.

2. VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC) Program

Sponsored by VA, the VSOC program provides Servicemembers, Veterans and dependents extensive support to ensure their needs are met as they transition from military to civilian life while pursuing their educational goals. VSOC counselors are trained vocational rehabilitation counselors and are located on various campuses throughout the United States. For more information on procedures specific to the VSOC program, see section 1.08 of this chapter.

3. Transition Assistance Program Presentations

Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is a collaborative effort between the Departments of Defense, Labor, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs. TAP is designed to meet the needs of separating Servicemembers and their spouses during their period of transition from military to civilian life. TAP offers counseling, assistance in identifying and obtaining employment and training opportunities, information about Veterans' benefits programs and other related information and services. For more information on TAP, visit www.benefits.va.gov/tap/.

4. Coming Home to Work Program

The Coming Home to Work (CHTW) program is an outreach and intervention program sponsored by VR&E. The Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) VRCs are an integral part of this program in providing early outreach and determining automatic entitlement under NDAA. This program provides opportunities for Servicemembers and Veterans to develop skills needed to transition to civilian employment, determine potential career opportunities and obtain and maintain suitable employment. For more information on the CHTW Program, see M28R.III.B.2.

b. Requesting Services

Servicemembers, Veterans and dependents who are interested in pursuing counseling services should request services by using VAF 28-8832. A signed written request may also be used if VAF 28-8832 is not available to the Veteran at the time of request. The request should include at a minimum the following information:

- Name
- Social Security number
- Contact information
- Discharge information, such as a copy of his/her Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD214)

VA Form 22-1990 may be used for this purpose. The request for Chapter 36 services should be annotated in the remarks section of the form.

See Appendix O, VA Forms, for access to the forms listed above.

c. Submitting Requests

Requests for educational and vocational counseling can be submitted in the following ways:

- Mail or deliver to a Military Service Coordinator
- Mail or deliver to a VA Regional Processing Office
- Mail or deliver to a VA Regional Office
- Deliver to a VSOC site

d. Processing Requests

The application or request for service must be date-stamped the day it arrives at a VA facility. All requests for Chapter 36 services must be reviewed to ensure the individual meets the eligibility criteria to receive educational and vocational counseling. Once eligibility is determined, the request is forwarded to the VR&E division of jurisdiction for processing. VR&E verifies eligibility via the BINQ screen to check character of service, type of discharge and service dates, and the MINQ screen for eligibility to other VA education programs and history of Chapter 31 claim on the Benefits Delivery Network (BDN).

e. Establishing a Corporate WINRS Record

Once eligibility is confirmed, VR&E will create a counseling folder and establish a Corporate WINRS (CWINRS) record. The CWINRS record will be opened in Applicant status effective the date of the first VA date stamp. VR&E will assign a case manager to coordinate and provide services.

Services can be provided by either a VRC employed by VR&E or by a contract counselor.

f. Scheduling Appointment for Counseling

The first step in the delivery of services is for the assigned VRC or contract counselor to schedule an appointment for counseling using the Chapter 36 appointment letter. VR-04, ED/Voc Counseling Appointment, should be sent to the individual and the appointment letter must be filed on the right side of the counseling folder. Use CWINRS Scheduler to establish an appointment in CWINRS. It is important to note that no appointment letter is necessary for unscheduled walk-ins, such as at a VSOC site, TAP brief, or IDES installation.

g. Chapter 31 Applicants in Receipt of Chapter 36 Services

If an application for Chapter 31 services is received while a Veteran or Servicemember has an open application for Chapter 36 services, VR&E staff must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Review CWINRS for a prior Chapter 31 record
2. Review the record to determine if the applicant meets basic eligibility criteria to include the following:
 - Qualifying military service
 - Character of service
 - Service-connected disability status, memorandum rating or eligibility under the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2008
3. If the applicant is eligible for Chapter 31 services, process the Chapter 31 application using AutoGED and proceed with Chapter 31 evaluation and entitlement processing. CWINRS will incorporate the Chapter 36 record into the Chapter 31 record, and the History screen will be annotated with Counseling Completed in Chapter 31. Any information contained in an existing counseling folder should be incorporated into a Counseling/Evaluation/ Rehabilitation (CER) folder when basic eligibility is established for a Veteran or Servicemember who applies for Chapter 31 services.
4. If the applicant is not eligible for Chapter 31, proceed with Chapter 36 application processing before disallowing the Chapter 31 claim.

1.06 Providing Chapter 36 Services

a. Service Providers

The following staff and contractors can provide educational/vocational career counseling or educational/vocational assessment services available through Chapter 36:

1. VRC Employed by VA

The VR&E Program employs a staff of professional VRCs at a variety of locations across the nation who provide Chapter 36 services.

2. Contract Counselors

VA has established contracts with a number of entities that employ professional counselors. These contracted services are provided to the majority of regional offices under a national contract referred to as the VetSuccess contracts. Those regional offices that do not have a VetSuccess contract may be able to establish local contracts. Refer to M28R.V.B.4 for more information on contracting activities.

The VR&E Officer is responsible for coordinating referrals for counseling to either VRCs on staff or contract counselors and ensuring that the funds for counseling services provided by contract counselors are obligated in the Centralized Administrative Accounting Transaction System (CAATS). The VR&E Officer must monitor the funds obligated to contract counseling as Congress places a statutory limit on the amount of money that can be used for these types of services. Presently, the cost for these services may not exceed \$6 million per fiscal year, as outlined in 38 U.S.C. 3697. Each office is allocated a specific portion of this appropriation.

b. Day of the Counseling Appointment

It is necessary to perform specific tasks on the day of the scheduled counseling appointment. These tasks are based on the following situations:

1. The Individual Attends the Counseling Appointment

When the individual arrives for the counseling appointment, the case should be left in Applicant status and the necessary counseling services should be provided.

It is important to note that Chapter 36 cases must remain in applicant status until closed. The proper case status movement is from Applicant to

either Closed with Counseling or Closed without Counseling. See section 1.07 of this chapter for additional information on case closure.

2. The Individual Does Not Attend the Counseling Appointment

If the individual does not attend the scheduled counseling appointment, a telephone call must be placed to him/her within 5 days to determine if he/she would like to reschedule. If he/she declines service or cannot be located, an email (if the individual's email address is available) and a letter must be sent informing the individual that he/she has 10 days to reschedule the appointment before action on the application will be stopped. The case remains in Applicant status during this period.

c. Chapter 36 Process

The following steps are required when providing Chapter 36 services:

1. Educational/Vocational Career Counseling

This step consists of an individual counseling session designed to assist with the resolution of academic, medical, financial or other barriers interfering with progress in meeting the individual's specified goal. During this counseling session, the VRC must identify the individual's specified goal and address any adjustment issues the individual is currently experiencing. For those individuals with a service-connected disability, it is imperative that the individual be made aware of eligibility for Chapter 31 services.

Additionally, the VRC must anticipate adjustment issues that may arise in the future as a result of transitioning from military to civilian employment, changing careers and/or participating in an educational or training program. The VRC must coordinate any referrals to VBA, VHA, or other campus and community resources necessary to address these issues. The VRC must also determine at this point if further assessment is required to help the individual identify a suitable employment goal. All individuals seeking Chapter 36 services may not be in need of educational/vocational assessment, especially students who have already chosen career paths. These individuals may only be in need of educational/vocational career counseling services. If it is determined that further assessment is required, then the VRC may skip the steps described in this section and immediately begin the steps for providing educational/vocational assessment outlined in this chapter.

The following guidelines must be adhered to when educational/vocational career counseling services are conducted by a counselor providing

services under the VetSuccess contracts:

- (a) The initial counseling session must be completed within seven calendar days of receipt of the referral for services.
- (b) Counseling services are limited to a one-time counseling session (per referral) to assist with the resolution of academic, medical, financial or other barriers interfering with progress in the educational program, and coordination of necessary referrals. If additional counseling sessions are needed, the contractor must staff the needs with VA as soon as possible to discuss additional referrals needed to ensure prompt service provision.
- (c) A plan of action should be developed to help the individual reach his/her specific goals. This plan should address academic, medical, financial or other barriers interfering with progress in meeting the individual's specified goal (including adjustment issues that may arise in the future) and must include any referrals necessary to address these issues. VAF 28-8606, Notes from Counseling and Next Steps must be used for this. The individual's signature on VAF 28-8606 should be obtained, the original provided to the individual and a copy filed on the right side of the individual's folder.
- (d) The educational/vocational narrative of the counseling session must be submitted to the VR&E Officer or designee within seven calendar days of the counseling session. Refer to section 1.06.c.3 of this chapter for guidance on completing an educational/vocational narrative.

Referrals to a contract counselor providing services under the VetSuccess contracts for Service Group D – Educational and Vocational Counseling must use the following Contract Line Item Number (CLIN): D-2 Educational and Vocational Career Counseling. If the contract counselor determines that further assessment is required then the VR&E Division should be contacted so that the referral can be upgraded to the following CLIN: D-1 Initial Educational and Vocational Assessment.

If the contract counselor is providing services under a locally developed contract, then the requirements specified in that contract should be followed.

2. Educational/Vocational Assessment

If the VRC determines that further assessment is required to help the individual identify a suitable employment goal, educational and vocational

assessment must be conducted. Educational and vocational assessment encompasses several steps and processes, including the following:

- (a) Obtain a complete account of the individual's medical, educational and vocational history, including barriers to employment, functional capacity and assessment of transferrable skills. Not all individuals seeking Chapter 36 services will have a disabling condition, so there may or may not be a need to address medical conditions.
- (b) Complete an assessment of academic functioning, interests, aptitudes and abilities. Further testing may not be necessary to complete this assessment if the individual's pattern of interests and school transcripts can be used as a substitute.
- (c) Perform a transferable skills analysis that includes an analysis of the individual's work traits, intellectual level and personal characteristics as compared to the characteristics and demands of specific jobs. The analysis must also outline transferable skills for direct employment or skills that can be built upon for future employment.
- (d) Provide vocational exploration guidance and counseling that considers transferable skills, impact of disability condition(s), vocational testing results, labor market conditions and demands, assistive technology and job modifications, and other factors. Vocational exploration results in the identification of suitable employment goals and steps needed to achieve the goal, including further education or training.
- (e) Develop a plan of action to help the individual reach his/her specific goals. This plan should address academic needs, any necessary accommodations or barriers to employment, and possible funding sources. VAF 28-8606, Notes from Counseling and Next Steps must be used for this. The individual's signature on VAF 28-8606 should be obtained, the original provided to the individual and a copy filed on the right side of the individual's folder.

If the assessment is completed by a counselor providing services under the VetSuccess contracts, the report of the findings from the assessment are due to the VR&E Officer or designee within 30 calendar days after date of the referral for services. Refer to section 1.06.c.3 of this chapter for guidance on completing an educational/vocational narrative.

If the assessment is completed by a counselor providing services under a local contract, the guidelines outlined in the local contract must be followed with regards to quality review and invoice payment.

3. Educational/Vocational Narrative

The results of either educational/vocational career counseling or educational/vocational assessment must be summarized into a comprehensive report that addresses the following criteria:

(a) Eligibility Data

This section's content must include the following eligibility information:

- Date VAF 28-8832 was received
- Referral source
- Education program to which the Servicemember, Veteran or dependent is entitled
- Information provided to the Servicemember, Veteran or dependent to explain use of the education program benefits

(b) Individual's History

The content of this section includes background information related to the individual's personal, educational, vocational and, if applicable, military history. It should address the following areas:

- Place of birth
- Home of residence (if relocating)
- Name/location of schools attended and degrees conferred
- Marital and dependent status
- Employment history, to include experience with supervision, adjustment to work assignments and performance
- Military history, to include branch of service, Military Occupational Specialty, rank, length of service and separation date
- Financial history and funding sources for proposed plan

(c) Disability Condition(s)

The content of this section includes any history of injury/illness that

may have occurred as a result of the individual's military service, as well as any other disabling conditions (as applicable). If available, records should be reviewed from the following sources:

- Service Treatment Records
- Military Evaluation Board
- Physical Evaluation Board
- All other medical records that are available, including information from private physicians

It is important to note not only the medical findings, but also the individual's perception of his/her current level of functioning and the impact of the disability on daily living. Additionally, any learning disabilities or special needs the individual experienced in past educational settings should be noted to identify any needed learning supports.

(d) Assessment of Interests, Aptitudes and Abilities

This section must include the following information (as applicable):

- The assessment instruments used, including a copy of transcripts, all administered tests and an explanation of the purpose of each test
- The result of the assessment as it relates to the individual's stated interests, aptitudes and functional abilities
- The vocational significance of each test result and estimated outcomes based on the results of the assessment – for example, noting that remedial classes will be necessary to prepare the individual to successfully compete in a post-secondary setting

(e) Vocational Exploration

This section includes identification of transferable skills and a comparison of those skills with current labor market information (as applicable). Current labor market information should be specific to the area in which the individual plans on residing after discharge or the completion of a training program. Identifying appropriate training programs or on-the-job training opportunities where the individual can build his/her competitive skills are a vital part of vocational exploration.

Resources to assist in the completion of the vocational exploration include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) at www.bls.gov/ooh
- Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) at www.occupationalinfo.org
- O*NET at www.onetonline.org
- Websites from schools, employers and professional organizations

(f) Synthesis of Educational/Vocational Assessment

This section should include the following information (as applicable):

- Summary of the individual's background
- Statement on the individual's vocational preparation
- Identification of transferable skills
- Education/training options
- Support systems and funding options
- Employment goals and steps to accomplish the goals
- Name, location and point of contact for more information on VA services
- Name, location and point of contact for State Vocational Rehabilitation services, if applicable
- Referral to local VA for the establishment of a service-connected disability claim, if applicable

The educational/vocational narrative must be completed on VAF 28-1902n (see Appendix O, VA Forms), or on contractor letterhead, and filed on the right side of the counseling folder with an electronic version placed into the individual's CWINRS file. If the narrative is completed by a VRC employed by VA, the report may be documented in a CWINRS note in lieu of the VAF 28-1902n.

If the narrative is completed by a VRC providing career counseling

services under the VetSuccess contracts, then it is due to the VR&E Officer or designee within 7 calendar days after the date of the referral for services. If the narrative is completed by a VRC providing assessment services under the VetSuccess contracts, then it is due to the VR&E Officer or designee within 30 calendar days after the date of the referral for services. If the VRC is providing services under a locally developed contract, then the VRC should refer to the requirements specified in that contract.

It is imperative that the counselor discusses the findings and recommendations of the narrative with the individual to ensure that all areas of concern have been addressed and the individual has enough information to make an informed choice concerning educational and vocational training, as well as VA benefits. This review should be completed during an in-person counseling session. However, if that is not possible due to the individual's circumstance (relocation, inability to attend a follow-up counseling appointment, etc.) the VRC can complete the review via telephone or teleconference.

d. Securing Information

Educational and vocational counseling under Chapter 36 is often provided in off-site locations, outside a VA facility or office. As such, the rules governing the protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) must be followed. See M28R.II.A.5 for a complete description of this process and the specific requirements for securing PII.

e. Limitations

1. The law that governs the delivery of Chapter 36 services, 38 U.S.C. 3697, limits the cost of these services to \$6 million per fiscal year for contracted services. Each office is allocated a specific portion of this annual appropriation.
2. Travel expenses incurred to attend counseling under Chapter 36 are not reimbursable to the beneficiary unless the counseling is required, as in the case of an individual who has been determined incompetent.

1.07 Completing Chapter 36 Services

It is necessary to update CWINRS with information on the completion of Chapter 36 services by selecting one of the following statuses:

a. Completed with Counseling

If the individual participated in any aspect of the counseling process (even if the individual received minimal assistance and declined further services) the case must be closed as Completed with Counseling. An educational/vocational narrative must be completed on VAF 28-1902n, or on contractor letterhead, and filed on the right side of the counseling folder with an electronic version placed into the individual's CWINRS file. If the narrative is completed by a VRC employed by VA, the report may be documented in a CWINRS note in lieu of a VAF 28-1902n.

A plan of action must also be completed on VAF 28-8606, Notes from Counseling and Next Steps for any individual who receives Chapter 36 services. The individual's signature on VAF 28-8606 should be obtained, the original provided to the individual and a copy filed on the right side of the individual's folder.

On the Claim Processing tab in CWINRS, select Update Disposition and complete the active fields, including Date Closed. In the Counseling Claim Disposition field, select 002 Counseling Services Completed as the claim disposition. Next, select Status, and in the Change Case Status menu, choose Completed With Counseling. Select OK and the record will be closed and archived. The Chapter 36 counseling services will be preserved in CWINRS Case History.

Letter VR-08, Completed With Counseling, should be sent to the individual indicating the requested Chapter 36 services have been completed. A copy of this letter should be filed on the right side of the counseling folder.

b. Completed without Counseling

If the individual did not participate in any aspect of the counseling process (to include individuals who decline over the phone), document the reason for closure on the Claim Processing tab in CWINRS. Select Update Disposition and complete the active fields as applicable, including Date Closed. In the Counseling Claim Disposition field, select either 001 Non Pursuit – Did Not Report or 003 Counseling Services Incomplete from the drop down box that allows you to select the end result of the counseling session(s). Next, select Status, and in the Change Case Status menu choose Completed Without Counseling. Select OK and the record will be closed and archived. The Chapter 36 counseling services will be preserved in CWINRS Case History.

Letter VR-22, Completed Without Counseling, should be sent to the individual indicating that no continued action will be taken on his/her request for services. A copy of this letter should be filed on the right side of the counseling folder. See Appendix AF, VA Letters for information on accessing VA Letters.

Note: Completing Chapter 36 services is not considered an adverse action. Therefore, it is not necessary to provide advance notice of the action or an explanation of rights.

1.08 VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC) Program Procedures

a. Comprehensive Services

Every Veteran, Servicemember and qualifying dependent on campus may receive Chapter 36 services in some capacity from the VSOC counselor. To be eligible for comprehensive Chapter 36 services, the student must complete VAF 28-8832. Comprehensive Chapter 36 services for eligible individuals may include the following:

- Full scope of services listed in section 1.03.b of this chapter
- Link and log-in information to CareerScope
- Analysis and review of CareerScope results
- Link and log-in to www.vetsuccess.va.gov and link to eBenefits
- Specific referrals to Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) or Veterans Health Administration (VHA) benefits based on the unique needs of the student
- Referrals to other campus and community resources

The VSOC counselor is responsible for providing VAF 28-8832 to the Veteran, Servicemember, or qualifying dependent. VAF 28-8832 may be completed prior to, during, or after counseling services have been provided. The form must be date stamped on the same day received.

Once the Chapter 36 record is created in CWINRS, it is rare that a case will ever be closed as Completed Without Counseling since some type of counseling will be provided in most cases. (Refer to section 1.05.e of this chapter for more information on establishing a CWINRS Record.) Only if the student does not show up or receive any services after filling out VAF 28-8832, should the case be closed as Completed Without Counseling. Completed With Counseling must be used to complete cases as appropriate.

An educational/vocational narrative must be completed on VAF 28-1902n and filed on the right side of the counseling folder or it may be documented in a CWINRS note.

b. Limited Services

If VAF 28-8832 is not completed by the student or the student does not wish to provide the information needed to process the form (e.g., name, social security number, etc.), the VSOC counselor may provide the following limited Chapter 36 services:

- Link and log-in information to CareerScope
- General VA Benefits information
- Link and log-in information to www.vetsuccess.va.gov and link to eBenefits
- Referrals to other campus and community resources

Note: All educational/vocational counseling services must be recorded by the VSOC counselor on the VSOC Monthly Tracking Spreadsheet (see Appendix BE, VSOC Monthly Tracking Spreadsheet) and sent electronically to the VR&E Service Central Office (CO) Outreach Mailbox by the 15th of each month. This includes services provided as part of Comprehensive Chapter 36 services or Limited Chapter 36 services.