

Empowering people who serve the public®



WHITE PAPER

Eight Things To Look for in Your VR Solution

Evaluating case management applications and vendors to support vocational rehabilitation services



Eight Things To Look for in Your VR Solution



Vocational rehabilitation (VR) is an ever-changing field with unique needs. Ideally, VR counselors have access to easy-to-use tools for developing, submitting, and tracking vocational rehabilitation cases efficiently and with a high level of accountability, compliance, and productivity.

That's a lot to ask from one system. What should a VR agency, or a technology buyer looking to support a VR office, consider when evaluating vocational rehabilitation software applications?

1. Fully-Compliant Functionality

When starting to contemplate a vocational rehabilitation system, start with the basics — a solution that is specifically configured for VR cases. Whether you are implementing a case management system for the first time, or upgrading from older software, you want something that will lead to more efficiency and lower costs. Consider the benefits of a web-based application to support all of the common rehabilitation workflows: vocational rehabilitation, pre-ETS, referral, intake, certificate of eligibility, IPE generation, authorizing services, vendor payment, post-employment and more.

As you work through cases, you must be sure to comply with all of the policies and reporting requirements governing VR programs, such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the latest policy directives issued by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). Your software applications must support your efforts to stay in compliance.

2. Flexibility To Change as Situations (and Regulations) Change

Because software is a major expense, many government agencies get stuck using software that is no longer innovative. Unfortunately, this can make it difficult or even impossible to adjust processes to meet changing needs.

One of those changes is the expanding scope of VR services. Whereas VR used to end when an individual received employment, new policies require the tracking of successes and the quality of the jobs received, as far as six quarters into the future, with the goal of reporting the return on investment (ROI) of the overall VR program to the federal government. The new requirements, included in the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) PD-19-03 Policy Directive, went into effect on July 1, 2020 and include strict guidelines for the completion of the case service report RSA-911.

Many older software applications used by vocational rehabilitation agencies did not have the flexibility to easily adapt to the changes that the RSA required. As a typical VR case lasts anywhere from one to seven years, the rules may change many times over the course of just one case.

In order to adjust to external changes like those imposed by the RSA, or internal changes like staff turnover, agencies should embrace software applications that are easy to configure to meet growing needs. Look for a system in which the data model, framework, business rules, workflows, and user interfaces all are extensible and configurable. This flexibility benefits the agency by providing the ability to make changes to processes more easily and rapidly.

A Flexible Choice

Tyler's Vocational Rehabilitation application provides agencies with the flexibility and extensibility to continuously configure, add to, and enhance their solution themselves, without being dependent upon Tyler's services. Built upon Tyler's Application Platform, it gives agencies a modern COTS VR solution with a highly extensible backend that can be configured easily to meet the changing needs of major business processes for compliance practices.

Eight Things To Look for in Your VR Solution



3. Open Architecture

Open Architecture allows agencies to integrate their case management systems easily with their current software systems. It gets them up and running faster, letting them use what they have and what is familiar.

Look for a system that is designed based on open standards and open architecture with layers of the platform fully exposed for simultaneous access and data exchange with other systems. This allows the agency to leverage investments in other technologies (such as in-house systems) via many different industry-standard interfaces such as SOAP, Web Services, APIs, Enterprise Service Bus, etc. This openness benefits the agency because integration with existing systems can happen quickly and cost-effectively.

4. Scalability to Meet Changing Demand

To be able to meet all future challenges, a vocational rehabilitation system must scale to handle an ever-changing number of VR counselors, providers, service types, and service recipients. A scalable system provides the agency with maximum system availability and allows VR services and functionality to be distributed across a load-balanced, clustered, or virtual computing environment. Consider whether the software vendor you are evaluating has extensive experience in implementing large scale, complex projects for varying sizes of agencies, particularly Vocational Rehabilitation agencies.

Purpose-built for the Public Sector

Tyler's open-architecture Application Platform has been successfully deployed for multiple large-scale applications with a concurrent user load of 5,000 concurrent users. It has been load tested up to 20,000 concurrent users. Solutions built on the Application Platform can support increased number of users via scalable architecture, deployment, and tuning.

5. Feature-rich Ease of Use

VR counselors do not want to be doing paperwork or back-end case administration when they could be sitting in person helping their participants. Look for an application that makes all of the documentation tasks as easy as possible for the counselors and administrative staff.

Look for an intuitive user interface and workflows that can be configured to match your processes. Web-based access can keep you working in the event that your counselors can't be in the office due to natural disaster or health conditions.

Some particularly helpful functionality might include:

- Holistic view of the participant and associated program case(s)
- Inclusion of easily-searchable case notes
- Easy adaptation of report and form headers and footers to reflect organizational changes
- Electronic signature support
- Streamlined updating of procedure codes across the entire database

Consider the daily tasks of VR counselors and support staff, and ensure that the application you implement not only supports those tasks, but streamlines them.

6. Accessibility

Accessibility is particularly important in a VR system.

In addition to the disabled participants who require VR services, many VR staff members are disabled Americans who have gone through the VR process themselves. To accommodate all of their needs, your software must have, at minimum, full Section 508 compliance. Also look for consistent page design and other design elements for ease of use, accommodations for assistive technology software, and compatibility with hardware and devices to accommodate accessibility such as Jaws®, Dragon® NaturallySpeaking, ZoomText®, and keyboard navigation. It is helpful if each user profile has an accessibility enhancement flag to designate if such devices are being utilized for that login, so the user interface is displayed accordingly.



Eight Things To Look for in Your VR Solution



7. Financial Tracking & Management

Many types of government agencies leverage case management applications, but VR agencies should look for case management with built-in functionality to help them follow federal rules for financial compliance. The application must be able to help track budgets and maintain specific records of the federal monies that are used to reimburse state VR programs. This helps the agency ensure that they are following the federal rules for how VR counselors use, apply, record, and document the funds for each case at each status level.

Currently, the RSA requires over 400 pieces of data to be tracked, with thousands of individual rules that must be followed. Look for a system that will allow you to pass your RSA audit and avoid penalties which result in loss of funding.

8. Experienced, Stable Partner

Because the vocational rehabilitation space is constantly in flux, it is especially important for VR agencies to choose a solid software application vendor, with both a track record of success and a plan in place for navigating the policy changes that are sure to come. Ensure that your vendor is basing their software development on input from VR and RSA policy experts in addition to their case management development expertise. Ask about their experience in migrating clients to new VR case management systems, as well as their experience in VR counseling, VR leadership, VR software and support, and RSA policy implementation and guidance.

The selection of a software application to support your Vocational Rehabilitation counselors is important, because your choice impacts how effectively you can help the people you serve. A good application automates and streamlines your workflows, while maintaining compliance with all the rules and policies that regulate your activities. These guidelines will help you evaluate your options.

Tyler's Vocational Rehabilitation Application

For over four decades, the team behind the Tyler Vocational Rehabilitation application has successfully provided case management and business process management software applications for U.S. state and federal government agencies, especially in the areas of Health, Human Services and Benefits, Justice and Law Enforcement, and regulatory case management. By connecting data and processes across disparate systems, Tyler's applications are transforming how clients gain actionable insights that solve problems in their communities. Tyler has more than 37,000 successful installations across more than 12,000 sites, with clients in all 50 states, Canada, the Caribbean, Australia, and other international locations.

The Tyler Application Platform is purpose-built for government. Since its introduction, it has been at the forefront of implementations with more than 200 deployments throughout federal, state, local, and higher education sectors. The Vocational Rehabilitation application is built on the Application Platform, and integrates with Encorpe's QA Advisor Plus to deliver a multi-period, multi-agency edit checker that simultaneously supports RSA Edit specifications, VR best practices, data quality edit checks, WIOA common performance measures and RSA's new extended performance measures.

Tyler Technologies, Inc.

Tyler Technologies (NYSE: TYL) provides integrated software and technology services to the public sector. Tyler's end-to-end solutions empower local, state, and federal government entities to operate more efficiently and connect more transparently with their constituents and with each other. By connecting data and processes across disparate systems, Tyler's solutions are transforming how clients gain actionable insights that solve problems in their communities. Tyler has more than 37,000 successful installations across more than 12,000 locations, with clients in all 50 states, Canada, the Caribbean, Australia, and other international locations. Tyler has been recognized numerous times for growth and innovation, including Government Technology's GovTech 100 list and Forbes' "Most Innovative Growth Companies" list. More information about Tyler Technologies, an S&P 500 company headquartered in Plano, Texas, can be found at tylertech.com.

tylertech.com | 1.888.355.1093 | info@tylertech.com