

Veterans Independence Program (VIP)

Veteran Handbook



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Welcome & Introductions

In this handbook, you will find:

- An overview of the Veterans Independence Program (VIP)
- How VIP works and what to expect
- The role of the Center for People With Disabilities (CPWD) in your care planning

The Center for People With Disabilities (CPWD) is a Center for Independent Living based in Colorado. Our mission is to provide resources, information, and advocacy to assist people with disabilities in overcoming barriers to independent living. CPWD started in Boulder Colorado in 1977 and is one of 400+ Centers for Independent Living (CIL) across the nation. If you would like more information about the other services CPWD provides, please refer to the brochure located in the front pocket of your introductory binder.

Centers for Independent Living are consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, nonresidential, private, nonprofit agencies that are designed and operated within local communities by individuals with disabilities. Centers require 51% of staff and Board of Directors to be persons with disabilities. Centers provide an array of Independent Living services and follow the Independent Living Philosophy. The Independent Living Philosophy is the realization that the freedom to make choices, learn from mistakes, and live in the community is a basic civil right. This framework aligns with the Veteran Directed Care program funded through the VA Medical Centers.

CPWD has a contract with the VA Medical Centers to provide Veteran Directed Care to Veterans in parts of Colorado, Wyoming, and Nebraska. In some areas, CPWD contracts with other agencies to provide these services under a Hub and Spoke model. When this happens, CPWD is still responsible for the program and has oversight of the program but the direct services are provided by another agency, known as a Spoke. CPWD currently works with two Spokes, LIV Health and Connections for Independent Living.

Regardless of who your assigned agency is, the program and services are the same.

The Basics - Roles

What is Veteran Directed Care (VDC) and VIP?

Veteran-Directed Care (VDC) is a program funded by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) health care system that allows eligible Veterans to receive services in their home and community while managing their own service plan and budget. The VA allocates funds to pay for non-skilled care for the Veteran. The VA contracts with agencies, such as CPWD, to implement and manage the program.

Veterans Independence Program (VIP) is the name of CPWD's VDC program. The program helps Veterans of all ages who need nonmedical supports and services, coaching and assistance with daily activities (such as bathing and getting dressed) or instrumental activities (such as fixing meals and taking medicines), who are isolated or whose caregiver is overburdened. The Veteran (or their authorized representative) manages their program based on a budget set by the VA. This is a voluntary program and Veterans can choose to end their program at any time by contacting their VIP Advisor. They can help connect Veterans to the VA Medical Center to determine if other supports or programs can meet the Veteran's needs.

What is the Veteran's role?

Veterans work with their VIP Advisor to determine what supports the Veteran needs to be able to maintain their independence, and identify goals and design a plan that can help the Veteran achieve these goals. The Veteran is the employer and hires and manages their caregivers (employees). Veterans have support from their VIP Advisor and FMS team, but ultimately the outcome is up to the Veteran.

Veterans have specific rights and responsibilities within VIP. These are described in depth later in this handbook (see pages 22–24).

What is an Authorized Representative for VIP?

If Veterans feel that making these decisions is more than they can do on their own, prefer to delegate these decisions, or are unable to make these decisions, they can ask someone else to serve as their Authorized Representative (AR) for VIP. In certain situations, CPWD may require an Authorized Representative due to concerns about the Veteran's capacity to manage the program without one. Your AR is only authorized to represent you within the VIP program. Your VIP Advisor can assist with the process of delegating an Authorized Representative.

What is CPWD and your VIP Advisor's role?

When Veterans enroll in the program, CPWD will assign a VIP Advisor. The VIP Advisor will help guide Veterans through the process by providing education around the program, its processes, and its requirements. They will maintain contact throughout the journey. Some of the things they can assist with include:

- Working with Veterans to identify, coordinate, monitor, and assess supports and services on an ongoing basis
 - Supporting Veterans in the creation of a spending plan that meets their needs and goals within the budget determined by the VA
 - Helping the Veteran manage their budget and monitor spending
 - Acting as an advocate, coach, and liaison between the Veteran, the VA, and the Financial Management Service (FMS)
 - Assisting in figuring out how to hire caregivers
 - Conducting periodic assessment of the Veteran's current and future needs and goals
 - Monitoring the Veteran's health and well-being and the impacts of the program
 - Providing additional independent living resources and information
- ❖ Once enrolled in VIP, Veterans are required to have a minimum of one monthly contact with their VIP Advisor, and quarterly in-person visits (at the Veteran's home). **Monthly contact** should cover operational updates and ensure the VDC

program is running smoothly. Example discussion topics include the Veteran's spending plan and whether it is meeting their needs; additional services and supports that may help the Veteran; the status of hired workers, including any signs of neglect or abuse of the Veteran and/or potential caregiver burnout; status of back-up workers in case regular employees are unable to provide regular services.

- ❖ **Quarterly in-person visits** (every 90 days) should be used to evaluate the Veteran's overall health and well-being. Example discussion topics include health status changes in the Veteran, the Veteran's overall experience in VDC, and identification of any unmet needs. During the visit, the VIP Advisor can identify potential hazards/difficulties in the home such as rugs, bathroom clutter, and areas where modifications may be needed.

What is a Financial Management Service (FMS)?

This program requires a Financial Management Service to handle the financial aspects. CPWD contracts with an agency, ARIS Solutions, to provide these services. ARIS will help set Veterans up as the Employer of Record with various state and federal entities, set up the Veteran's employees, run background checks, pay caregivers based on approved spending, and handle taxes for the employer and employees. They provide other state-specific services, such as workers' compensation policies based on state regulations.

Another Way To Think About It...



VDC is the boat
and it is provided
by the VA



The Veteran is
the Captain



CPWD is the navigator. We
help the Veteran figure out
how to get where they
want to go.

Eligibility & Duplication of Services

How is eligibility and the budget for VIP determined?

The VA Medical Center will determine whether you meet the eligibility requirements for VIP, based on medical and functional criteria established by that VA Medical Center. These may differ between VA Medical Centers, and each VA Medical Center manages its own program. It is the responsibility of Veterans who choose to seek care outside of the VA to make sure that their medical records are being sent to the VA. Without these records, the VA Program Coordinator may not have a full picture of the Veteran's needs, and that may result in a budget that does not meet those needs. The VA Medical Center determines the budget based on care needs and the county the Veteran resides in. The budget can change based on changing needs and care levels, and on how the VA Medical Center interprets the assessment of needs. Eligibility is re-examined annually by the VA Medical Center, so Veterans must see their VA provider every year to get a new referral to VIP.

Duplication of services

There are various VA and government funded programs that you may be receiving. Some examples of these programs include:

- PCAFC (Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers)
- VA Beneficiary Travel Reimbursement
- Bladder Program
- Medicare and Medicaid funded programs

It is important to discuss these programs and services with your VIP Advisor to avoid any concerns about duplication of services. According to the VA, care funded through VDC programs cannot be "simultaneously and regularly provided by or through another individual or entity." It is the responsibility of the Veteran to inform their VIP Advisor about any other programs they receive, so that the VIP Advisor can help them make an informed decision about what services to request through VIP.

How Does It Work?

How do Veterans direct their own services?

For Veterans who have never directed their own services, this program may involve learning new skills, such as managing employees (care providers), following program guidelines, and managing a budget. The VIP Advisors are able to help Veterans develop their Spending Plan and master the skills needed to be successful in VIP.

What goods and services can the budget cover?

Veterans may purchase services or items that address the needs identified in the assessment that the VIP Advisor completes, as long as they do not duplicate services or items covered by another funding source. Purchases must be within the limit of the budget. Our VIP Advisors assist Veterans in identifying those services and supports. Specific goods and services are discussed in depth later in this handbook (see page 15).

What happens to unspent funds?

The funding for the program is based on an authorization from the VA that is typically good for one year. The funds for this program stay with the VA and do not go directly to Veterans. The VIP Advisor will work with the Veteran to create a Spending Plan based on the monthly amount budgeted by the VA. The program is flexible, and if a Veteran has unused funds one month, they can be used in a future month as long as it is still within the authorization period. Unused funds do not carry over to the next authorization period. Veterans need to manage their budgets with support from their VIP Advisor and ARIS, the Financial Management Service (FMS) that bills the VA for approved expenses.

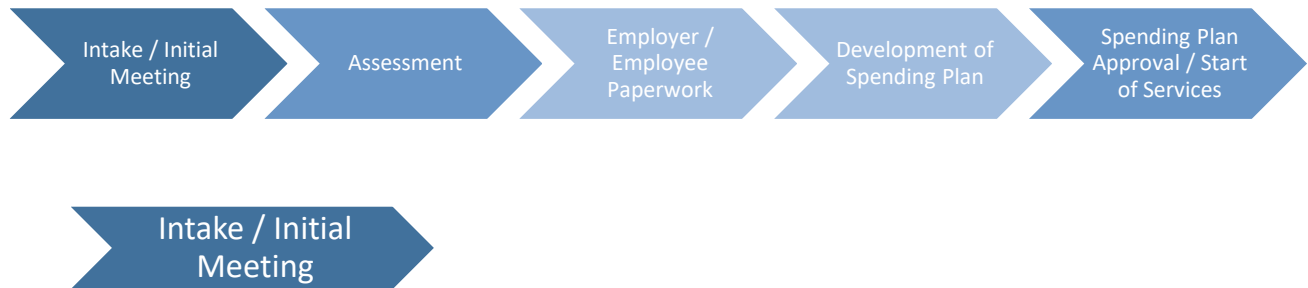
Who can Veterans hire?

Veterans may hire anyone who is able to perform the job duties outlined in the spending plan, as long as they meet the established criteria. Employees must be at least 18 years of age and legally able to work in the United States. This includes family members, friends, and neighbors. Employees (care providers) must undergo a criminal background check, complete employee paperwork, and be added to the Veteran's spending plan before they can begin working under this program. Employees must also demonstrate that they are proficient in the tasks required for the specific job duties or be trained to acquire those skills.

VIP requires all potential Veteran employees and Authorized Representatives to pass a criminal background check. If there are findings on the background check, the VIP Advisor will discuss them with the Veteran to evaluate the information and help determine if the Veteran wants to continue with the hiring process. There are some convictions that will disqualify an employee from working in the program. This includes felony convictions for fraud, abuse, and/or exploitation of an individual of any age. Depending on the state, there may be additional disqualifying convictions. If there are findings on a potential employee's background check, the Veteran and VIP Advisor will follow the "Veteran Employee Background Check Finding Process" outlined in detail in Attachment 1.

Special Note: If the Veteran has delegated a person to act as their Authorized Representative for the program, that person cannot become a paid caregiver as well.

Intake / Enrollment Process / Timeline

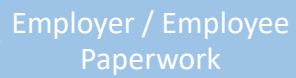


During the intake meeting, the VIP Advisor will explain the VIP program in detail before Veterans decide if they want to move forward. Then the VIP Advisor will begin to create a file (including recording basic demographic information), review VIP policies and procedures, and start getting necessary paperwork and releases signed.



As part of the intake meeting, or at a following meeting, the VIP Advisor will conduct an in-depth assessment to learn more about the Veteran's goals and support needs. The assessment gathers information about medical conditions, personal care needs, and who the Veteran wants to meet those needs. This assessment will help the VA determine eligibility for the program and the appropriate level of care needed. The VA will then compare this to their records to determine the funds that they will allocate to pay for care for the Veteran.

This assessment is completed multiple times: at enrollment, at the six-month mark, and before the annual reauthorization period. If there are significant changes in the Veteran's health or care needs, a change of status assessment can be completed. It is important to contact the VIP Advisor right away if the Veteran is hospitalized or has experienced a significant change that affects care needs.



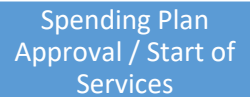
Employer / Employee
Paperwork

The VIP Advisor will guide Veterans through the employer and employee paperwork. This is what ARIS will use to set up the Veteran as an “Employer of Record” and allow them to hire employees.



Development of
Spending Plan

The next step is to make a Spending Plan based on the goals and needs discussed with your VIP Advisor in the assessment process. The VIP Advisor will help Veterans prioritize needs and estimate the costs of the services and goods necessary to meet those needs, based on the budget the VA provides. There is room on the Spending Plan to include information about other goods and services not funded through VIP. This helps provide a comprehensive plan of what is needed to meet the Veteran’s goals.



Spending Plan
Approval / Start of
Services

Once the spending plan is designed to meet the Veteran’s needs, it will need to be signed by the Veteran (or AR), VIP Advisor, and VA Program Coordinator. Once all parties have signed it, services can begin on the agreed-upon date. Spending Plans cannot be backdated. Only items on an approved, signed spending plan can be paid through VIP.

Spending Plan – In Depth

It is important to keep in mind that any service paid for with the VIP budget must relate to needs identified in the assessment. There may be times when the VIP Advisor or VA Program Coordinator denies a request to put a service or item into the Spending Plan because it does not relate to an identified need. If, after discussing the issue with the VIP Advisor, the Veteran disagrees with this decision, the Veteran may request a review of the denial from the VA Program Manager at the VA Medical Center.

The purchase of goods and services must meet all the following criteria:

- Meets the identified needs, goals, and outcomes in the Veteran’s spending plan;
- Improves the Veteran’s ability to remain safely in their home;
- Addresses the ADLs or IADLs needs of the Veteran;
- Be the least costly alternative that reasonably meets the Veteran’s identified needs;
- Not be provided or paid for by VA, Medicare, Medicaid, TRICARE, or other agency, organization, program, service, or insurance;
- Not be the responsibility of the Veteran as a homeowner to maintain, repair, or replace goods and services;
AND
- **Be for the Veteran.**

If all the above criteria are met, goods and services are appropriate purchases when they are reasonably necessary to meet one or more of the following Veteran outcomes:

- Support the ability of the Veteran to remain in their home and access their community resources and network;
- Enhance community inclusion and family involvement;
- Develop, maintain, or improve personal, social, physical, or work-related skills;
- Decrease dependency on formal support services (i.e., reduce the need for purchasing services through other professional health and community-based service providers);
- Increase the Veteran’s independence;
- Increase the Veteran’s safety in their home and community; and/or
- Enhance family involvement by increasing the ability of direct care workers and caregivers, including family members and friends, to receive education and skills training needed to provide support to the Veteran.

Per VDC Operations Manual Template, February 2023

The types of support available from VIP fall into the following categories:

- ❖ **Personal Care Assistance Services** – physical or verbal assistance with eating, bathing, dressing, grooming, and transferring
 - This may also include transportation as long as it is not reimbursed by other means, such as the VA Beneficiary Travel program.
 - ❖ **Homemaker Services** – cleaning, laundry, shopping, and meal planning and preparation
 - ❖ **Adult Day Care**
 - ❖ **Assistive Technology** – emergency response systems and electronic pill reminders
 - ❖ **Home-Delivered Meals**
 - ❖ **Caregiver Support Services and Respite Care** – These supports include services for unpaid family caregivers, like respite care, support groups, and education on strategies for managing the stress of caregiving, to help them continue to support the Veteran in an informal capacity.
 - ❖ **Environmental Support or Vehicle Modifications** – yard care, snow removal, extensive cleaning, ramps, handrails or vehicle modifications
 - ❖ **Participant-Directed Goods, Services, and Supports** – This category includes things like small appliances, humidifiers, orthopedic devices, lift chairs, and other equipment necessary for Veterans to be able to function more independently. It can also include services such as advertising for a personal care provider. The VA prefers to use their Durable Medical Equipment program if appropriate.
 - ❖ **Training and Educational Supports** – This can include training or education for the Veteran on relevant health issues or personal skill development, or training for paid or unpaid caregivers related to your needs. The training must relate to a need identified in your care assessment.
- Treatment and Health Maintenance Supports** – Only if not funded another way.

Selecting service providers / caregivers / employees

The VIP Advisor will help Veterans decide which types of service are best suited to meet the Veteran's particular needs and goals, and will explain which providers are available to perform those services and supports.

If personal care assistance is included on the spending plan, someone will need to be hired to fill this role. Veterans may have someone in mind to provide this service, such as a family member or friend. If not, the VIP Advisor can provide information on different methods of recruiting employees and help the Veteran develop a job description. CPWD does not recruit employees or have a listing of potential employees.

How are the services and goods paid for?

As stated earlier in this handbook, the Financial Management Service (FMS) for VIP is ARIS. They handle all financial transactions on the Veteran's behalf once approved by the VA. ARIS will only issue funds when the purchase is included on the signed spending plan and the Veteran has approved the purchase in writing. This includes the Veteran approving employee timesheets. The VA will not approve retroactive payments, and nothing can be purchased prior to VA approval.

There are multiple ways that goods can be purchased and paid for. Once these have been approved by all parties, the VIP Advisor will work with the Veteran to determine the best course of action.

Emergency planning / back-up plan

In developing the Spending Plan, Veterans will need to think about the kinds of emergencies that are unexpected but inevitable. For instance, is there a back-up plan in case an employee is sick or unable to work for some other reason? The Spending Plan might include using unpaid friends or family to help in this situation. Another option could be planning to use a more expensive home care agency provider

temporarily. Emergency planning is essential for Veterans to maintain their independence, and the VA may require that Veterans have such plans in place before moving forward.

Finalizing the Spending Plan

Once there is a completed Spending Plan, all parties will need to sign the document before those services and supports can begin. The Veteran (or their Authorized Representative) will sign the document, and then the VIP Advisor will forward it to the VA for their approval. Once the VA approves, services can begin. The VIP Advisor will notify the Veteran that services can begin, and will forward the completed document to ARIS. If the VA Program Manager has concerns or refuses to sign the spending plan as written, the VIP Advisor will meet with the Veteran to address these concerns and revise the spending plan.

Making changes to the Spending Plan

Sometimes things do not go as planned. If Veterans find that one or more of the services they receive are not providing the support they need, it may be necessary to change or modify the Spending Plan. Veterans are allowed to make one change to the Spending Plan per month, unless they experience some kind of emergency requiring an additional change. However, Veterans can call their VIP Advisor at any time to discuss any concerns they have about their services.

The Spending Plan will have to be updated every time it is necessary to make a change in the services being received. For example, a Veteran may decide to have a bath rail installed, after which they would no longer need to employ someone to provide bathing assistance. This decision would require a change to the Spending Plan to reflect the different use of funds and costs, adding a one-time payment for the bath rail installation and ending the recurring payment of the employee's wages. Alternatively, Veterans might decide that they need to terminate an employee and hire a different caregiver for

the same position. Even though the payment amount may not change, the Spending Plan would still have to be updated to make sure the wages go to the correct person.

It is the VIP Advisor's job to work with Veterans on developing and modifying a Spending Plan. If you ask ARIS for help in changing your Spending Plan, they will direct you back to your VIP Advisor.

What is the Role of the FMS Agency, ARIS?

Setting up employers and employees

ARIS will process the employer paperwork that the Veteran or their Authorized Representative completes. They will work to set this party up as the "Employer of Record," which allows them to direct their program. ARIS serves as the "employer's agent," but is not the employer of the Veteran's employees.

ARIS will also process the paperwork submitted for new employees, including running background checks. Employees must be set up and cleared prior to being added to the Spending Plan. Only Employees who are listed on the Spending Plan are authorized to be paid with VIP funds.

Paying for services and supports

ARIS will pay for the services and other items included in the Veteran's Spending Plan based on the approved authorization. If the Veteran exceeds the annual amount authorized by the VA, ARIS will not pay for those items, and the Veteran or their authorized representative (AR) will be responsible for paying for those items. This is one reason that Veterans, with the help of their VIP Advisor, need to monitor spending throughout the authorization period.

As a Veteran, no payments can be issued from your account without your express written authorization. Payment for hourly service providers (employees) will be authorized based on their time sheets, which you must sign and submit to ARIS via the approved process.

When the Veteran or AR signs a timesheet or other payment authorization, they are essentially saying that the Veteran is satisfied with the service or goods provided. Employees with hourly wages must be paid for all hours worked. If there has been a problem with the quality of goods or services, or if they have not been provided as agreed, the Veteran must let ARIS and their VIP Advisor know so that steps can be taken to correct the issue.

Requests for payments must be made in a timely manner. This includes all employee timesheets, invoices, and reimbursement requests. If these are submitted more than 120 days after the date of service, ARIS may not be able to make the payment, and the Veteran would be responsible. If Veterans have a pattern of submitting late items for payment, their VIP Advisor will work with them to correct the issue. This may fall under the program's Non-Compliance Policy (see page 25).

Employee payroll

The Veteran's employees are required to complete timesheets in order to be paid for the care that they provide. Timesheets can be completed electronically or on paper. At the end of the payroll period, the employee will need to sign their timesheet verifying the hours that they have worked. The Veteran will then review the timesheet, verify that the information on the timesheet is correct, and sign it. Veterans must submit their approved (signed) timesheets by the due date in order for their employees to be paid on time.

Goods and services

Goods or services that are purchased will only be paid once ARIS has the correct paperwork. The paperwork will depend on how these items are set up for payment.

- If ARIS is paying directly, the Veteran will need to complete the appropriate vendor paperwork.
- If the Veteran pays for the item first, ARIS will reimburse the Veteran, as long as the item is listed on the approved Veteran Spending Plan. Veterans will need to submit a copy of the invoice or receipt to ARIS for payment.

ARIS will not make payment for items or services not identified in your Spending Plan.

Managing your authorized budget

ARIS will receive a copy of your VA authorization, which includes the start and end dates of the authorization, the annual authorization amount, the target monthly allocation, and administrative fees. ARIS uses this information to help manage your budget.

It is important that Veterans (or their Authorized Representative) have a system for tracking their monthly expenses and storing paperwork, such as timesheets and written authorizations for purchases. VIP Advisors can assist Veterans in understanding and managing their budget, but in the end, the Veteran is in charge and is responsible for how they spend their funds.

Your FMS consultant or team at ARIS will maintain records of everything that you authorized and that they paid for from your account, including deductions for any planned purchase of equipment or supports you may have included in your Spending Plan. ARIS will automatically deduct taxes and fees (including workers' comp if applicable) from your monthly budget. These can vary throughout the plan year, so Veterans should set aside some funds in their Spending Plan for these unexpected fees.

Monitoring Your Services & Supports

An important part of the VIP program is monitoring to make sure that Veterans are receiving the services and supports they requested and that those services and supports are being provided in accordance with the Spending Plan. The VIP Advisor and FMS team will play a role in monitoring this, but monitoring is required on the Veteran's end as well. You may decide to do this monitoring for yourself, or you may ask a relative or friend to help you with this task. In any case, it is important that you and/or your representative work closely with your FMS team to ensure that you receive the supports and services you have put in your Spending Plan. CPWD has a number of tools that may help you with this, including a monthly spending worksheet and spending summary.

Veterans need to pay close attention to the number of hours their employees are working. Employees cannot work over 12 hours in one day or more than 40 hours in one week. If this occurs, the employee must be paid overtime wages that equal 1.5 times their normal pay rate. The VA does not approve of overtime hours and ongoing issues could lead to situations covered in the non compliance policy.

Only the Veteran or Authorized Representative may verify and sign timesheets.

Report any changes in care to the VIP Advisor as soon as possible. This includes major medical changes, changes in employees, and any other changes to the plan, as well as hospitalizations or skilled nursing facility stays. Employees may not submit hours on their timesheets while the veteran is hospitalized or in rehabilitation.

Veterans' Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct is a set of rules outlining the responsibilities and proper practices for VIP participants and CPWD. Staff, volunteers, and Veterans will conduct business in a positive, supportive, respectful, and safe environment. CPWD (and its Spoke providers) reserve the right to discontinue services if this Code of Conduct is not adhered to.

- ❖ All parties can expect to be treated professionally, courteously, and respectfully by one another.
- ❖ Neither the Veteran, nor VIP staff, will be expected to tolerate rude, abusive, threatening, indecent, obscene, intimidating, or violent language, and/or behavior. This includes sexual misconduct and indecent exposure.
- ❖ Anyone exhibiting such behavior, including other guests in the home, will be asked to leave the area. If the request is refused, VIP staff have the right to leave, and to call law enforcement if they deem it necessary.
- ❖ All parties will refrain from smoking while meeting with the VIP Advisor.

The following items are given special consideration, for the safety of Veterans and staff, for the delivery of service in an efficient and effective manner, and to ensure that laws are upheld. The VIP Advisor conducts home visits with the participants, so these items are of special notice.

- ❖ Veterans should not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs during home visits from the VIP Advisor or other staff. This includes legal and illegal drugs, alcohol, and any prescription medication that affects your mental state. This rule is to prevent accidents or other dangerous situations that may result from drug or alcohol use, and to ensure that Veterans can think clearly during home visits.
- ❖ Veterans and VIP staff are not permitted to solicit money, items, or services from one another or from other VIP participants.
- ❖ Weapons are not allowed in CPWD buildings or on the grounds. If weapons are brought onto CPWD premises, law enforcement will be notified. During home visits by VIP staff, all firearms must be locked up or put in a separate room.

Veteran Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Veteran and/or their Authorized Representative to direct their own services within the guidelines of the VIP Program. The VIP Advisor is available to provide support, information, and assistance, but Veteran Directed Care means that the Veteran is ultimately responsible for managing their own program.

Responsibilities:

1. Provide your VIP Advisor with enough information to assess your needs and help in the creation of your Spending Plan. Make sure your Spending Plan addresses the needs identified in your assessment.
2. Ensure you hire qualified care providers as employees.
3. Supervise your employees and let them know what you expect from them. You are their employer.
 - Arrange work schedules and verify the hours your employees have worked
 - Locate a backup care provider(s) in case of emergency
 - Replace employees who you terminate or who resigns
 - Keep records, including copies of time sheets and reimbursements
4. Communicate clearly and seek the advice of your VIP Advisor and Financial Management Service (FMS) team as needed.
5. Follow and monitor your Spending Plan. Purchase only what is listed in your Spending Plan.
6. Send all required financial information and documents to the FMS in a timely manner.
7. Create a back-up plan for essential services and adhere to it in case of emergencies or unforeseen circumstances not covered in your Spending Plan.
8. Maintain regular contact and communication with your VIP Advisor.
 - Contact your VIP Advisor at least once a month, and meet in person quarterly
 - Notify your VIP Advisor of all admissions into a hospital, nursing facility, or other residential facility
 - Report changes in your contact information (address, phone, email)
 - Report any changes to your Spending Plan, including the hiring or termination of new employees (caregivers)

Veteran Rights

As a consumer of CPWD and Participant of the VIP Program, you have the right to:

- Not be discriminated against by CPWD staff or Board of Directors because of your type of disability, age, race, gender, gender identity, national origin, citizenship, sexual orientation, or political and/or religious beliefs.
- View information in your file with a written request.
- Have any person of your choice present at any meetings with the CPWD staff.
- Voice and file grievances without fear of discrimination or reprisal. The grievance procedure is outlined in more detail starting on page 28 of this handbook.
- Make informed choices based upon appropriate information, and have those choices respected, while respecting the rights of others to disagree.
- Feel safe and secure in all aspects of life, including health and well-being.
- Be free from exploitation and abuse, but not overprotected.
- Have your personal privacy respected, and your information not shared with personnel except as needed to provide your VIP assistance.
- Ask questions until you understand the answer.
- Receive a report of how your monthly allotment was spent.
- Voluntarily withdraw from the program at any time.

What if things aren't going well?

When there are problems, the Veteran and VIP Advisor will work together to try to find a solution. This may involve discussions around spending, the appropriateness of the current caregivers, or how to manage the program. If the problem is not resolved, then this may result in verbal and written warning as outlined in the non-compliance policy on the next page.

In certain situations, the VIP Advisor may require a Risk Mitigation Plan. This is used when Veterans are choosing to make decisions that could have negative consequences, such as when a Veteran chooses to hire an employee with certain findings on their background checks.

Mandatory Reporting: All staff working within VIP are considered mandatory reporters, and must follow the mandatory reporting laws for their state if they suspect abuse or neglect. This may involve reporting to Adult Protective Services (APS), law enforcement, or other local authorities, as appropriate. Any mandatory reporting issues will be relayed to the VIP Program Manager and VA Program Coordinator within 24 hours.

Non-Compliance Policy

Failure to comply with the program expectations and guidelines may result in disciplinary actions, potentially leading to the Veteran's termination from the program. Whenever possible, CPWD will work with the Veteran to resolve the issue. However, depending on the nature of the infraction, some issues may result in termination from the program. CPWD will follow a disciplinary process of increasing severity.

- **Verbal Warning** – The VIP Advisor will review the issue with the Veteran or AR and provide additional coaching and training as needed. A Veteran may receive more than one verbal warning, but repeated verbal warnings will result in an escalation to a written warning.

- **Written Warning** – If the issue is severe or if repeated verbal warnings are ineffective, a written warning will be given to the Veteran. The written warning will detail the issue, steps taken previously, timeline for correction, and consequences if the issue is not resolved. In addition, the VIP Advisor will review the Veterans Handbook with the Veteran. Both the Veteran or AR and the VIP Advisor will sign the written warning, and the written warning will be submitted to the Program Manager.
- **Termination** – If the issues are severe and previous verbal and written warnings are not effective, the veteran may be terminated from the program. If this occurs, the VIP Advisor, Program Manager, and VA will discuss the situation and determine the best way to move forward. CPWD will send written notification to the Veteran if they have been terminated.

Special Situations – Travel & Snowbird

It is important to communicate any travel or snowbird (seasonal change of residence) plans to your VIP Advisor in advance to determine if your program can continue during this period. This will depend on the location of where you will be traveling or living, the length of stay, and whether your employee caregivers will be traveling with you. Care can only be provided within U.S. States, the District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.), or U.S. Territories. Other points to consider are workers' compensation and labor laws. Veterans cannot hire new employees outside of their primary residence. If a Veteran has an Authorized Representative, the AR will need be able to manage employees at the Veteran's temporary residence.

During time away from your primary residence, communication with your VIP Advisor must continue as usual. If the length of stay will interfere with the 90-day in-person visit, additional approvals must be obtained. The length of stay cannot exceed 180 days per program guidelines.

Plans to continue the VIP program while you travel must be approved by both the CPWD Program Manager and the VA Program Coordinator.

Reporting Requirements

Veterans enrolling in VIP should be aware that CPWD (and its Spoke providers) are required to provide information and discuss the Veteran's program with the VA Program Manager, and with other VA providers as deemed necessary by the Program Manager. CPWD also provides necessary information and documentation to the FMS provider, ARIS. This does not require a separate release of information, and your enrollment into the program constitutes an understanding of this level of information sharing.

CPWD maintains a file for all Veterans enrolled in VIP. These files are digital, and Veterans may request to review the file or have copies of forms at any time.

CPWD releases statistical information to various funding sources. This does not include personally identifiable and health-related information protected by Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Your written permission is needed to make any referrals or release any information about you and or your condition. This information will not be shared until you complete a Release of Information form. For Veterans choosing to use an Authorized Representative, the AR authorization form constitutes a Release of Information to the representative.

In an emergency, including potential risk to your health, safety, and welfare, CPWD and your VIP Advisor have the legal responsibility to report personally identifiable and health-related information without requiring additional permission from you or your AR.

Filing Complaints and Grievances

Both the VA and your FMS (ARIS) have written procedures explaining how VIP participants can lodge a formal complaint about their services in situations where issues of concern cannot be resolved informally. If you have an issue with the VA or your FMS, please contact the VIP Program Manager to discuss the issue (contact information is in the next section). If you are unable to resolve a problem related to your VA or FMS services after using either organization's formal procedures, you may contact your VIP Program Manager for more information.

Veterans have the right to voice grievances or to complain whenever there is a concern or problem. CPWD and ARIS will not discriminate or retaliate against you for making a complaint. You are encouraged to speak openly and honestly with your VIP Advisor and FMS team about any concern related to your VIP services.

If you are dissatisfied with the services you receive from CPWD and the VIP program or your VIP Advisor, and you feel comfortable speaking to CPWD staff, please voice your concern using the following process:

1. The Veteran discusses concerns with their VIP Advisor.
2. If the problem is with the VIP Advisor, or if the VIP Advisor does not resolve the issue within five working days, the Veteran should contact the VIP Program Manager (see the contact information below). The VIP Program Manager will reply within five days of receiving the complaint.
3. If the Veteran does not feel the problem was resolved, or if it is impractical for them to discuss their concerns with the individuals listed above, the Veteran may submit a grievance to the Executive Director of CPWD within 10 days of hearing from the VIP Program Manager.
4. If the Veteran is unhappy with the Executive Director's decision, they may submit a grievance to the CPWD Board of Directors.

You can always get the contact information for CPWD staff, Executive Director, or Board of Directors from your VIP Advisor.

Center for People with

Disabilities

Email: Veterans@cpwd.org

303-442-8662

Fax: 303-442-0502

VIP Program Manager

Holly Ewing

holly@cpwd.org

303-442-8662 x 205

Fax: 303-792-031

Client Assistance Program

You may also take your grievance to the Client Assistance Program (CAP) at any time. A CAP employee will work with you to address your unresolved complaint against CPWD or another Center for Independent Living. You can reach a CAP staff member by calling or writing:

Client Assistance Program

455 Sherman Street, Suite 130

Denver, CO 80203-4403

Toll-Free 800-288-1376 Voice/TTY

Fax: 303-722-0720

E-mail: tlcmail@thelegalcenter.org

Notice of Privacy Practices

This Notice describes how protected health information and personally identifiable information (PHI/PII) about you may be used and disclosed, and how you can get access to this information. It applies to all of your information (PHI/PII) used to make decisions about your supports and services that CPWD's Veterans Independence Program generates or maintains. Veterans Independence Program (VIP) activities and services are provided by CPWD. The information you provide to CPWD is **voluntary**. This Notice also explains your rights. Please review it carefully.

The Veterans Independence Program is required by law to maintain the privacy of your protected health information/personally identifiable information, give you this Notice of the Veterans Independence Program's legal duties and privacy practices with respect to it, and follow the terms of the current Notice. These practices will be followed by all employees, management, student interns, volunteers, trainees, and other persons under the direction of the Veterans Independence Program when performing VIP activities and services.

The Veterans Independence Program may use or disclose your PHI/PII for the reasons below:

- The Veterans Independence Program will share your PHI/PII only for the purposes directly relating to providing services or referrals, including establishing eligibility, determining amount of assistance, providing services, and/or administering those services through VIP.
- The Veterans Independence Program will share your PHI/PII, only when authorized by you or your authorized representative, with persons or agencies you designate, or with entities that have a formal agreement/contract with the Veterans Independence Program directly relating to performing VIP activities and that comply with the VIP privacy policies and procedures.
- The Veterans Independence Program may also use and disclose your protected health information as permitted by law in the following cases:

- To entities outside the Veterans Independence Program, only if the information used is to verify income or eligibility or to provide services.
- In responding to public emergencies, access to health information may be granted to persons or agency representatives who are subject to standards of confidentiality comparable to those of the Veterans Independence Program. Such agencies may include the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
- To inform Adult Protective Services in situations when reporting abuse or neglect is required by law.
- To inform emergency responders in situations when the Veterans Independence Program participant is at imminent risk, whereby the participant's health/safety is endangered, to protect the life of the participant.
- PHI/PII disclosure as otherwise required by law.

The Veterans Independence Program will not use or share your PHI/PII for any other reason unless you give VIP written permission. You may withdraw your permission in writing at any time. Your permission for the Veterans Independence Program to use or share your information will end when the Veterans Independence Program Privacy Officer receives your written notice to withdraw your permission. See VIP Privacy Officer's contact information below.

The Veterans Independence Program may use or share de-identified information without your permission. This means VIP may remove all personally identifying information from a record and combine the de-identified records of many participants to create aggregate demographic and service information that cannot be linked to any individual. De-identified information may be used to publish agency and/or program reports for quality management requirements, public relations, education, research, and/or informative purposes.

Your rights. You may ask the Veterans Independence Program to do any of the following if you ask the Veterans Independence Program Privacy Officer in writing.

- **Right to access/copy PHI/PII:** You may ask to see or get copies of your information that the Veterans Independence Program has on record.

- **Right to amend PHI/PII:** You may ask VIP to correct your information.
- **Right to restrict use or disclosure:** You may ask VIP not to use or share your PHI/PII.
- **Right to confidential communications:** You may ask VIP to contact you about your PHI/PII privately in a different way or at a different place than VIP is currently doing. For example, you may request an in-person discussion rather than a discussion over the phone.
- **Right to an accounting of disclosures:** You may ask for a list of the times and reasons that VIP or its contractors have shared your information.
- **Right to receive another copy of this Notice.**

Complaints. You have the right to file a complaint with the Veterans Independence Program about its compliance regarding its privacy policies and procedures. VIP will investigate the complaint and provide you with a response and/or resolution to the investigation. You may file a complaint with the VIP Privacy Officer at the address below, or file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services authority. VIP will not hold it against you if you file a complaint.

Margaret Catterall, VIP Privacy Officer
Center for People With Disabilities
1675 Range Street
Boulder, CO 80301
(303) 442-8662 ext.244
margaret@cpwd.org



Veteran Employee Background Check Finding Process

When there are positive findings on an employee background check, the FMS will inform the Veteran or Authorized Representative, VIP Advisor, and CPWD Program Manager of the findings. The FMS will not move forward with setting up the employee until notified by CPWD and a waiver is completed.

- The CPWD Program Manager, VIP Advisor, and Veteran/Authorized Representative will review the positive findings. If the Veteran would still like to move forward with hiring the employee, the VIP Advisor will review potential risks with the Veteran.
 - If the crime was of such a serious nature or circumstance that the perpetrator may pose a risk to the health, safety, or well-being of the Veteran, then employment cannot move forward. Such crimes include but are not limited to: murder; manslaughter; assault; sex offenses; domestic violence; theft or forgery; arson; kidnapping; or the possession, use, sale, manufacture, or distribution of dangerous drugs or controlled substances. This list follows state guidelines for consumer-directed programs.
 - In some cases, the employee can still be hired with an approved Risk Mitigation Plan in place.
- The Veteran will then complete the Criminal Background Check Acknowledgement / Waiver from the FMS. The waiver will state whether the Veteran chooses to move forward with employment or not to hire the employee.

Contesting Background Check Results

- If the background check displays a finding of a conviction that the potential employee does not agree with, they may contest the finding by presenting relevant documents to CPWD Program Manager, such as a certified copy of court records showing acquittal or clearance of the conviction record.
- The CPWD Program manager shall respond in writing within ten (10) working days after receiving notice of the contested finding and the supporting certified records, to state whether the employee is eligible for hire or still not eligible for hire.
- An individual who contests the background check findings and is disqualified may appeal the disqualification in writing to CPWD Program Manager. The Program Manager will respond in writing within ten (10) working days. The Program Manager's decision is final and includes input from the VA Program Coordinator.