

# Business Enterprises Program and Training

**Consumer Handbook**

**2025**

# Department of Rehabilitation is an employment and independent living resource for people with disabilities.

# THE BUSINESS ENTERPRISES PROGRAM

The Business Enterprises Program (BEP) was first created through the Federal Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936, which authorized a priority for visually impaired individuals to operate vending services in federal facilities. California State law, enacted in 1945, expanded the federal program to provide priority to BEP vending facilities on State property.

The California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) Business Enterprises Program provides training, licensure, and employment opportunities for persons who are legally blind in the management of food service and vending facilities on state and federal properties within California.

The BEP promotes and develops new locations in state, federal, and Department of Defense buildings for vending and food service operations. Other services include the design and installation of new facilities, remodeling of older facilities, and the procurement of food service equipment.

BEP provides ongoing support to licensed blind vendors as they remain in the program. The support includes providing maintenance and repair of equipment, various training opportunities, upward mobility, and business consultation services.

In California the average yearly earnings for a BEP Vendor are approximately $50,434. In addition, vendors have several excellent benefits including health, dental and life insurance, plus a sound retirement program. There are currently about 60 full time vendors operating 81 locations with 391 employees throughout the state. A location may consist of multiple sites and some vendors manage more than one facility.

BEP provides an excellent opportunity for DOR Consumers to become an independent, small business owner and a productive, self-sufficient participant in the economy.

## BEP Facility Types

BEP vending and food service facilities are recognized for their organized and convenient delivery of various food products. The term food service facility covers a wide range of business operations, including the following.

Dry/Wet Vending Stand – A specialty convenience store, providing manual dispensing of beverages, snacks, prepackaged food items, gifts, souvenirs, sundry items, and services.

Snack Bar – A vending location selling a limited line of refreshment and prepared food items.

Cafeterias – A food service facility providing a broad variety of food and beverages prepared on or off the premises, including hot meals.

Vending Machine Facilities – A vending facility is a combined group automated coin or currency operated vending machines dispensing food, snack, refreshments, or sundry items.

Military Dining Facility – A facility that is teamed with a private company, which prepares meals for military personnel in a cafeteria style environment.

## BEP Vendor

A BEP Vendor is a “Legally Blind” individual who independently operates a vending facility within the state of California on state or federal property, with a license issued by the BEP. A Vendor is required to independently secure all business and health permits, and applicable policies, hire, pay, and supervise employees, pay federal and state taxes, develop menus, manage inventory, and purchase merchandise for sale in a BEP Facility.

## Consumer Requirements

An individual must meet the following requirements to become a DOR Consumer and to receive services through the DOR.

1. A United States citizen
2. At least 18 years of age
3. Legally blind
4. A Consumer of the Department of Rehabilitation

## Required Skills

It is required that a DOR Consumer possess the following social and technical skills in preparation for the food service industry and a future BEP Training.

* Independence in daily living, communication, orientation, and mobility, with the ability to use adaptive aids.
* Proficiency in using Assistive Technology devices and software, as needed.
* Proficiency and knowledge of Microsoft Office Word, Excel, and Outlook – to use independently.
* Math skills equivalent for balancing checking accounts, ledgers, and calculating business math for everyday use as independent business owner.
* Work experience that is transferable to operating a foodservice facility, examples are: business, customers service, retail, food service, and/or other work experience.
* Professional communication and positive interpersonal skills are required in working with others, such as listening skills, receptive to constructive feedback, workplace etiquette, collaboration, problem-solving, and managing difficult circumstances respectfully and timely.
* Show potential to succeed in the BEP Training Program and assume the entrepreneurial responsibilities of a BEP Vendor.

The Counselor may recommend or request that the Consumer develop the above skills through various seminars, workshops, or classes prior to applying for a BEP Training.

## Pre-Training Preparatory Steps

It is required that the Consumer take the following preparatory steps showing aptitude, competency, and initiative in preparation for a 20-day Pre-Entry Evaluation. All steps provide critical feedback to the Counselor and Consumer to ensure the Consumer’s readiness for the intensive curriculum for the BEP.

## Steps

1. Take the World of Work Inventory through a DOR Counselor.
2. DOR Counselor sets an appointment with BEP Training Officer and Consumer to discuss the BEP Training Program.
3. Successfully pass Comprehensive Work-Related Behaviors and Skills Assessment performed at Orientation Center for the Blind.
4. Successfully complete ServSafe Manager Training and Exam.
5. Complete and pass a 20-day BEP Pre-Entry Evaluation
(DR 446 Form). The BEP Training Officer schedules in conjunction with Counselor.
6. Complete the *Chicago Lighthouse Business Enterprise Course – California* prior to the first date of the in-person training class.
7. Be invited to interview with the BEP Applicant Review Panel.

## Step 1 – World of Work Inventory

The World of Work Inventory (WOWI) is an assessment scheduled through the Consumer’s DOR Counselor. It is recommended that the Consumer work with their counselor to complete the WOWI for feedback of skills and readiness for applying to the BEP Training and career goals.

## Step 2 – BEP Training Infomercial Call The DOR Counselor will contact the BEP Training Officer to schedule a call to provide a BEP Training infomercial with the Consumer. During the call an overview of the training is provided, answering the Consumer’s questions.

## Step 3 – Attend Orientation Center for the Blind

Successfully pass an assessment at Orientation Center for the Blind in Albany, California. Counselor can assist with getting this set up and after completion the assessment will be discussed with BEP Staff and counselor for next steps.

## Step 4 – ServSafe Training and Manager Exam

The Counselor will arrange with the Consumer to obtain their food handlers card and ServSafe Manger Certificate through ServSafe online training. This provides the Consumer the required knowledge and to properly be prepared to work within a food service facility. This can be accessed at the following link on the California Restaurant Association: <https://www.calrest.org/> .

Once a Consumer successfully passes the ServSafe Manager Exam then the Counselor and BEP Staff can arrange for consumer to do the 20 Day Pre-Evaluation.

## Step 5 – 20-day Pre-Entry Evaluation

The 20-day Pre-Entry Vendor Evaluation takes place at an established BEP food service location under the direction of the BEP Training Officer and a licensed BEP Vendor. The Evaluation is for 20 business days, a maximum of eight hours per day, five days a week. The BEP Vendor will evaluate and score the Consumer on 12 categories.

An evaluation period is to be treated like a job, it is “hands on” work and the Consumer will perform the work of a regular employee. The Evaluation is to determine the Consumer’s level of mobility, physical stamina to perform the necessary duties of a BEP business owner, assess “soft” (communication) skills required for foodservice, and the aptitude of the Consumer for owning and operating a business independently.

Full attendance and promptness are mandatory and critical to the success of the Consumer’s evaluation. Excessive tardiness will disqualify a Consumer for consideration to the next BEP Training. Absences or no-shows are unacceptable. Any no-show, other than one caused by a medical emergency that renders the Consumer unable to make a telephone call, will cause the Consumer to be eliminated for consideration to the next BEP Training and referred to their Counselor for further career goal evaluation.

## Step 6 - BEP Applicant Review Panel Interview

The Consumer will interview before the BEP Applicant Review Panel (ARP). The ARP consists of two BEP staff and two active BEP Vendors of the California Vendor’s Policy Committee. Consumer applicants will be asked to share their knowledge of BEP, general business practices based on their work history and education, and the Vendor’s Evaluation. All applicants should bring a resume showing all previous work experience, skills, and/or volunteer service.

The ARP interview is based on a scoring system. Each panel member will score the applicant. The ARP score is added with the score of the Vendor Evaluation (DR 446). Acceptance into the BEP Training is be based on the Consumer having a passing score of 70% or higher. If the Consumer’s ARP Interview is successful, the Consumer will be accepted into the next BEP Training.

If the Consumer’s ARP score is less than 70%, the Consumer will work with their Rehabilitation Counselor to (Title 9, Section 7212(i)):

1. Establish a plan of classes, training, business, and/or work experience, which may increase the consumer’s ability to successfully re-interview for a future BEP Training.

Or

 2. Re-evaluate the consumer’s choice to become a BEP Vendor
 and assess other potential vocational goals.

## BEP Training

The BEP Training is offered throughout the year at the Department of Rehabilitation Sacramento headquarters at 721 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, California. The curriculum is presented in a virtual platform. The training is a business program to prepare the student for the food service industry and to become an independent business owner. The training is comprised of two components.

1. Classroom Education and Training
2. Occupational Skills Training

## Classroom Education and Training

The in-class training curriculum covers the following, yet is not limited to:

* History of Randolph-Sheppard Act, Customer Service, Sanitation and Safety, Injury and Illness Prevention Program, Worker’s Compensation and Liability
* Labor Laws and Harassment Prevention, Payroll and Taxes, Monthly Operating Report, and Record Keeping
* Daily Cash Reports, Quarterly Sales Taxes and Payments
* Convenience Store, Vending Machine Operations, Inventory and Cost Controls in Food Service
* BEP Regulations, and Vendor Operating Agreement and Obligations

In addition to the curriculum topics previously listed, the Consumer will complete online and digital assignments prior to arriving in person for the BEP Training.

## Occupational Skills Training

The Occupational Skills Training (OST) takes place at a designated BEP Vendor facility in Sacramento and may include other areas in California. OST provides practical experience and application of in-class training and operating a facility. OST will introduce the student to the types of facilities available in the program and is an important part of the student’s final grade.

BEP Training students are expected to always maintain a professional demeanor. Behavior that is disruptive or discourteous to a DOR employee, BEP Vendor, customers, or suppliers while in the classroom or at an OST assignment, will not be tolerated. Dress codes for the classroom and OST assignments must be followed as well.

## BEP License

To graduate from the BEP Training, the Consumer will be required to complete and pass the following exams and assignments with a grade of 70% or higher (DR 454 Final Appraisal).

* ServSafe Managers Exam (Required score of 75% or higher)
* A Midterm Exam
* A Final Exam
* Three Additional Exams
* Occupational Skills Training
* Simulated Selection Panel Interview
* Business Plan and Resume
* Weekly Modules, Quizzes, and Homework Assignments

Once a student has successfully passed the BEP Training, with a score of 70% or higher, they are awarded a BEP License through the Department of Rehabilitation Business Enterprises Program.

All consumers need to enter the BEP Training Class within 3 years of completing the required prerequisites listed in the BEP Consumer Handbook.   If more than 3 years has transpired without attending the Training Class, the consumer must restart the prerequisites again.

In 2025, the prerequisite requirements for entering the BEP Training Class were updated. Therefore, any consumer who has completed the previous listed requirements needs to refer to the updated BEP Consumer Handbook to ensure they’ve completed all steps. At any given time, we reserve the right to place the BEP Training Class on hold for circumstances outside of our control.

## Obtaining a Vending Facility

When a BEP Vending Facility becomes available, a Vending Facility Announcement is sent to all BEP Vendors and Licensees. An interested Vendor or Licensee must complete and send their application packet via email or mail to the BEP Sacramento office, prior to the final filing date as specified in the Vending Facility Announcement.

Once all qualifying candidates’ applications have been received, competitive interviews and the selection process are conducted by the Selection Committee Panel of the Contracting Agency that controls the property on which the BEP Vending facility is located. The Selection Committee Panel usually consists of three representatives of the Contracting Agency, who are non-Department of Rehabilitation employees. The Selection Committee awards the BEP Facility to the highest scored applicant.

It should be noted that an average timeframe for a new BEP Licensee varies from two to twelve months to acquire their first BEP Facility.

## Become a Consumer

To become a Consumer of the Department of Rehabilitation, please contact a DOR Rehabilitation Counselor. A DOR Counselor will work with the Consumer to evaluate and provide important feedback in the preparation process for a future BEP Training.

## Department of Rehabilitation Links to Services

Additional information about the Department of Rehabilitation or the Business Enterprises Program may be found on the following web pages. The following links are to Department of Rehabilitation Services:

Click on the link for: [Blind Field Services](https://www.dor.ca.gov/Home/BlindFieldServices)

Click on the link for: [Business Enterprises Program](https://www.dor.ca.gov/Home/BEP)