

Self-Employment Q & A

Budding Entrepreneurs & Government Red Tape

Q. I applied for help in starting a business through the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) after suffering a major injury. My application was accepted, but it's been four years of delay.

I have an advocate, but every time we solve one problem the vocational counselor assigned to my case finds another way to delay progress. I have done everything required of me, but nothing seems to work. What can I do?

A. Your story is not unusual, according to professional insiders. Although the agency has provided funds for some applicants to start businesses, DOR bureaucracy can be horrific. For instance, one applicant in enrolled in an acceptable design course, yet couldn't get approval for the Apple software necessary to begin the course.

Some counselors deliberately withhold information about the availability of resources, according to a client advocate. Despite the law, there are government officials who dislike seeing entrepreneurial programs funded. Making a complaint up the chain of command is often futile and may result in retaliatory measures for the applicant.

Contact your congressional representative with a written outline of what you have experienced and what you'd like to see happen. They may assign someone who can resolve the problem. Consult a qualified and experienced advocate and consider reapplying in another district.

In his book, *Job-Hunting for the So- Called Handicapped: or People Who Have Disabilities*, career guru Richard Nelson Bolles, discusses good and bad vocational counselors and strategies to avoid pitfalls. <http://www.amazon.com/Job-Hunting>