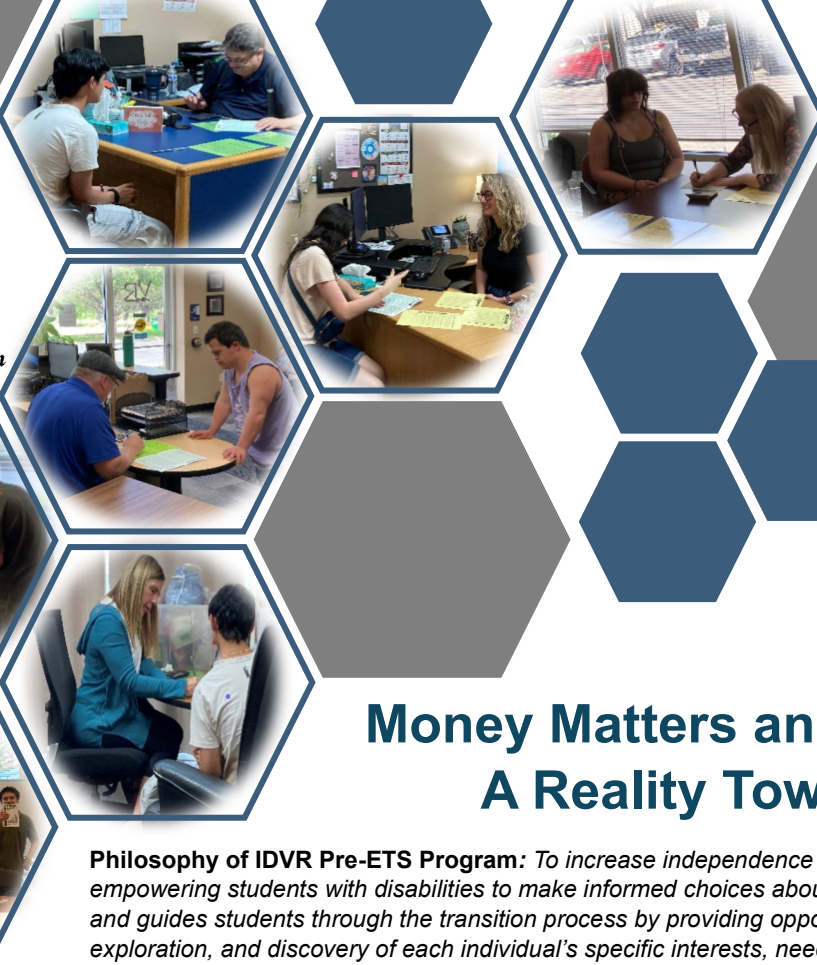




Idaho Division of
Vocational Rehabilitation



Money Matters and Career Choices: A Reality Town Experience

Philosophy of IDVR Pre-ETS Program: *To increase independence and future success in the workplace by empowering students with disabilities to make informed choices about their transition options. IDVR supports and guides students through the transition process by providing opportunities for skill development, career exploration, and discovery of each individual's specific interests, needs, and abilities.*

This summer, the Meridian Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) office hosted its first-ever in-office *Reality Town* event—an immersive financial literacy experience designed to help students with disabilities better understand the real-world cost of living and the importance of career planning.

Led entirely by the VR team across programs, the event welcomed 23 students from Boise, Kuna, McCall, Nampa, and Meridian, along with some of their parents. The event was split into two sessions: one focused on financial literacy and budgeting, and the other offered the hands-on Reality Town simulation.

Students began with a 'reality check' activity using Next Steps Idaho, sparking meaningful discussions about income, expenses, and the limits of earning minimum wage. This naturally led into conversations about the value of post-secondary educational paths and long-term career planning.

In the Reality Town simulation, students rotated through various booths set up throughout the VR office—purchasing cars, managing housing costs, and planning for childcare. Unlike traditional large-scale events, this intimate office setup allowed for more personalized interactions, with counselors taking time to engage students in thoughtful discussions about choices, goals, and consequences of decisions made.

"The Reality Town at the Meridian office was a success! It was the first time we have ran it in a more intimate office setting and included a financial literacy presentation as well. We had students attend from several Treasure Valley high schools; students even came down from Garden Valley and McCall to attend. It was an amazing partnership between Business Services, Adult Program, and the Pre-ETS teams to make this event a success!"

– Mackenzy Starkey, Pre-ETS VR Counselor

"I found the one-on-one format to be effective, as it provided more time to engage with the students and helped them understand financial concepts and what their money was going toward. The Next Steps Idaho Plan Smart presentation was an excellent complement to Reality Town and helped students begin thinking about real-life expenses and budgeting. One student comment that stood out was, 'I actually had fun and learned something' which captured the impact of the event. During the wrap up, it was also insightful to hear student's express genuine surprise about the actual cost of everyday expenses like daycare and groceries."

– Lorri Dale, Pre-ETS VR Counselor

A proud partner of the **AmericanJobCenter** network

Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation | www.vr.idaho.gov | 208-334-3390