**Melissa**

(Melissa)

My name is Melissa and I work in Human Resources for the USDA. I do biweekly reports and monthly reports, I return phone calls, I reply to emails, and the emails are mostly about apply for a job with us. And when people send paper applications in the mail, I enter those in the system.

(Melissa)

I was really looking for permanent work with security and benefits to look for a job.

(Melissa)

I started working with the Vocational Rehab in a program, I was in high school. And then I was, they watched me throughout college and I was able to get financial help. And then I went through them to find permanent work. I was afraid of losing my benefits, but I knew I wanted full-time work. I wanted full-time work because I wanted to be independent and make it on my own and be able to get a mortgage. My Voc Rehab counselor informed me of the resources they had in finding work, so they had computers to look for work. I went, I took resume writing classes. My Voc Rehab counselor explained to me that being on benefits, that I was only allowed to make so much money until my benefits were cut off. Unfortunately, I no longer have contact with my VR counselor, because I’m doing really well on my own, which was the goal. Working with a counselor made me feel really grateful that that resource was there for me. I can’t explain to you how grateful I am for that help that I got. Had I not had that resource of VR there for me, I wouldn’t be doing so well today. I have no idea where I’d be if it were not for that. I would tell someone who’s in the same situation that I was in that it was really worth getting off the benefits. I’m so happy that resource was there for me when I needed it most, but it’s even more worth it getting off it and being independent. Since getting my full-time job, my life has been great. I was able to get, move out of my dad’s house, get a mortgage. I’ve done a lot of traveling, I work out at the health club and it’s just great being independent. I can’t explain to you how happy I am that I’ve been able to do all the things I’ve done. I’ve been working at the USDA for sixteen years, July 30, 2016.