



A GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

What can I expect?

How does it work?

What part do I play?



VR services help people with disabilities prepare for, find, keep and advance in employment.



Texas Workforce Solutions is comprised of the Texas Workforce Commission, 28 local workforce development boards and our service-providing partners. Together we provide workforce education, training and support services, including vocational rehabilitation assistance for the people of Texas.

What are vocational rehabilitation services?

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) services help people with disabilities prepare for, find, keep and advance in competitive integrated employment. Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS) deliver these services in Texas. You may be eligible for services, depending upon how your disability interferes with work. TWS-VRS counselors will work with you to ensure that you have the opportunity to make informed choices when you select an employment goal, services and service providers that will help you reach that goal.

How do I apply?

To apply for services, call, write or visit the office nearest you and request an appointment to meet with a TWS-VRS counselor. If you need help locating an office in your area, call 800-628-5115. When you contact the local office, please let us know if you need translator services or other accommodations for your appointment.

Do I need to bring anything with me when I apply for services?

When you meet with your counselor, it is helpful if you have photo identification (for example, driver's license, state-issued ID, school ID, passport or military ID) and your Social Security card. If you do not have these, you can still apply for services. However, you must provide documentation verifying that you can legally work in the United States before you can be determined eligible for TWS-VRS services.

If you have any of the following additional information, bring it to your meeting:

- Your home address, as well as your mailing address
- Names and addresses of any doctors you have seen recently
- Names and addresses of any schools you have attended
- Information about any medical insurance you have
- A list of places you have worked, including type of job, dates, the reason you left and salary
- Proof of income for you and your spouse or your parents if they claim you as a dependent on their income tax (for example, a copy of your latest pay stub, Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) award letter, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) award letter, workers compensation notice of payment or latest income tax return)
- Proof of expenses related to monthly mortgage/rental payments, debts imposed by court order, personal medical costs and other disability-related expenses
- Names, addresses and phone numbers of two people who will always know how to contact you



- Any reports of recent medical exams, school records or other information that you feel may help the counselor understand your disability

During your appointment, your TWS-VRS counselor will explain the services available through TWS-VRS and will ask you:

- To explain how your disability makes it hard for you to work.
- How you think we can help you go to work.

All records and information are strictly confidential.

What happens after I have finished the application?

Your counselor will want to learn more about you through one or more of the following ways:

- Getting information from your doctors and schools
- Sending you to a new doctor to find out about your current medical condition
- Having you take tests to find out more about your interests, abilities and skills

Your counselor will make the appointments for you. You won't have to pay for these appointments.

It is important that you keep all appointments. Please let your TWS-VRS counselor know if you can't make it to one. If you miss an appointment, it may take much longer for you to get services.

TWS-VRS provides services to help bridge the gap between you and meaningful employment.





Does everyone who applies receive services?

No; in order to receive services, you must

- Be present in the state of Texas.
- Have a physical and/or mental condition that affects your ability to work.
- Need vocational rehabilitation (VR) services in order to help you get and/or keep a job.
- Be able to get and keep a job after receiving services.
- Need VR services in order to advance in your career.

If you are eligible for SSI or SSDI because of your disability, you are presumed eligible for VR services.

Who decides if I can get services?

After reviewing all of the facts, your TWS-VRS counselor will decide if you can receive VR services. If you are determined to be eligible, you will become a TWS-VRS consumer. As a consumer, you play an important role in helping us to help you reach your goal.

However, if your counselor tells you that VR services can't help, your case file will be closed and you will receive a letter telling you why and what actions you can take if you don't agree. You may be referred to other programs or agencies that may be able to help you.

What kind of services are available?

TWS-VRS provides services to help bridge the gap between you and meaningful employment. Some examples of services are training, counseling, surgery, artificial arms and legs, hearing aids, transportation, sign language interpreters, on-the-job supports and help finding a job. You probably won't need all of these services and there may be other services that you need that are not on this list. You will get only those services that will help you reach your employment goal.

Your counselor will provide you with information about available options and alternatives in selecting the services you need for successful employment.

What is the plan?

If you are eligible for VR services, the next step will be to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Your IPE will include your employment goal, the services you need to reach your employment goal and your agreed participation in these services.

TWS-VRS will not pay to help develop the IPE, but you do have the option of writing your own IPE or working:

- With your TWS-VRS counselor
- With a qualified VR counselor not employed by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)
- With another resource outside of TWC

Whichever option you choose, the information for the IPE must be reviewed and approved by the TWS-VRS counselor, entered into the TWS-VRS computer system and signed by you or your representative. You or your representative will receive a printed copy of the IPE for your records.



What are the components of my IPE?

- The employment goal
- A list of steps needed to achieve the employment goal; for example, complete training
- A schedule of how often you and your counselor will contact each other; for example, every 60 days
- Criteria that will be used to evaluate your progress; for example, medical reports
- A description of services you need to achieve your employment goal, including the start and end dates of each service, the service providers and how services will be obtained
- A statement about how you were involved in choosing the employment goal, services, service providers and methods for providing the services
- Your responsibilities in achieving the employment goal; for example, applying for financial aid
- A list of other organizations that you will be responsible for applying to, and for using their services; for example, a VA hospital
- The amount that you may be required to contribute toward the cost of services if your net income and/or assets exceed TWS-VRS basic living requirements
- Statements about the terms and conditions for services from TWS-VRS and your right to appeal decisions made by your counselor
- Signatures from you or your representative and your TWS-VRS counselor



*Eligibility for TWS-VRS services
does not depend on your income.*



I'll need to participate in paying for service, won't I?

Eligibility for services from TWS-VRS does not depend on your income or liquid assets. However, if your net income or liquid assets exceed TWS-VRS basic living requirements, you must help pay for some services, unless an exception has been granted. Also, if you are receiving Social Security disability benefits, you are not required to help pay for any services.

Your counselor will request proof of income and expenses from you and/or your parents (if they claim you on their income taxes). You must disclose income, liquid assets and expenses. Failure to provide complete and accurate financial information is a violation of Texas law and may result in a denial or delay of services.

All services are subject to required participation in the cost of services except:

- Services paid or reimbursed by a source other than TWS-VRS
- Assessments for determining eligibility and determining vocational needs, including any associated maintenance and transportation
- Counseling, guidance and referral provided by TWS-VRS
- Job-related services
- Personal assistant services
- Auxiliary aids or services; for example, interpreter services, reader services and translator services

How is my participation determined?

If you are asked to help pay for VR services, it is because your monthly income (plus any of the allowable additions listed below) or liquid assets exceed the TWS-VRS Basic Living Requirement (BLR). BLR is based on the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) (<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/>) and changes annually when the FPG is adjusted for inflation. You may request a copy of the current BLR table from your counselor.

To determine how your income and liquid assets compare with BLR limits, your counselor will review the net income and liquid assets of you and your spouse and your parents (or foster parents, legal guardian or conservator), if they claim you as a dependent on their income taxes.

- If your liquid assets are greater than the BLR level in the table, plus any allowable additions, then you must pay an amount equal to the excess each month that TWS-VRS pays for goods and/or services.
- If your monthly income is greater than the amount listed in the BLR table, plus any allowable additions, then you must pay an amount equal to that excess each month that TWS-VRS pays for goods and/or services.
- Your portion of the cost of services may be paid in kind. For example, you may pay the additional cost associated with transportation to receive services or pay for needed uniforms or textbooks.

Allowable additions to BLR:

- Monthly home mortgage or rental payments
- Prescribed diets and medicines for you
- Your personal medical costs and disability related expenses
- Debts imposed by court order

After I reach my employment goal — then what?

When you have been working for a while, and you and your counselor agree that things are going well, you will receive a letter letting you know that your case has been closed. You are an important part of the workforce and can be proud of what you have accomplished. If you run into any problems after your case has been closed, let your TWS-VRS counselor know.

But what if I have a problem?

If you have trouble at work, let your counselor know immediately so that he or she can help you work it out.

There may be times when you don't understand or agree with the decisions your counselor makes about your case. If you have a concern about the types of services that you are getting or think you should be able to get services when you've been told that you can't, the best thing to do is to discuss your concerns with your counselor.

What can I do if I disagree with my counselor's decision?

If you talk with your counselor and you still don't agree, you may ask to talk to the TWS-VRS counselor's supervisor.

We hope you will attempt to resolve your disagreement through your TWS-VRS counselor. However, if you have talked to your counselor and are still not satisfied, you may request a review by a hearing officer or a mediator to help reach an agreement. You can get a copy of the brochure "Can We Talk? Appeal Procedures for Consumers," which explains the appeal process, from your counselor.

Are there other places I can go to ask questions?

For more information call 800-628-5115 or contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP) Intake Line at 800-252-9108.

CAP can help you:

- Understand VR service.
- Communicate better with your VR counselor.
- Mediate disagreements.
- Take administrative or legal steps.
- Refer you to other services and benefits.

Does TWC have other programs and services?

TWC has a variety of programs and services for people with disabilities. Additional TWS-VRS services include Supported Employment services, the Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center and Business Enterprises of Texas program. Contact your local TWC office for more information.



Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services
101 East 15th Street
Austin, Texas 78778-0001
800-628-5115

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program
Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request
to individuals with disabilities.
Relay Texas: 800-735-2989 (TTY) and 711 (Voice).

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