



DARS

Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services

Programs Transitioning to the Texas Workforce Commission

Texas Workforce Solutions is comprised of the Texas Workforce Commission, 28 local workforce development boards and our service providing partners.



This booklet is intended to provide general information on the transfer of the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) programs and services to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). Consumers seeking information on DARS programs moving to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) can visit the HHSC Transformation web page:

www.hhsc.state.tx.us/hhs-transformation

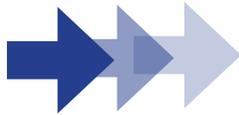


Which DARS programs are transferring to TWC?

- The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program for people with visual impairments, including the Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center
- The Vocational Rehabilitation program for people with other disabilities
- The Business Enterprises of Texas (BET) Program
- Independent Living (IL) Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind grant program

The full integration of VR services into Workforce Solutions offices will happen in phases over the next several years.

Through legislative action and authorization by Governor Greg Abbott during the 84th Texas Legislature, programs from the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) will transfer to the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC).



Which DARS programs are transferring to HHSC?

- Autism program
- Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program
- Blindness Education, Screening, and Treatment (BEST) program
- Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services (CRS) program
- Disability Determination Services
- Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECI)
- Independent Living Services program
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

When will these programs transfer?

As of September 1, 2016 TWC and HHSC will take over responsibility for the programs transferring from DARS.

The transfer of programs and services is being carefully planned and implemented in order to ensure continuity of services for a smooth transition for both consumers and employees. Consumers can expect their services to continue:

- Without interruption.
- In most cases, from the same locations where they receive services now.
- Without any action needed on the part of consumers.

In most instances, consumers will work with the same counselors and staff and receive the same services.

For more information about programs transferring to TWC, visit the TWC Transition website:

www.texasworkforce.org/darstransition

What are the advantages of transferring DARS Vocational Rehabilitation services to TWC?

Part of the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) mission is to create innovative workforce strategies that provide individuals the opportunity to achieve and sustain economic prosperity. Texas Workforce Solutions is comprised of the Texas Workforce Commission, 28 local workforce development boards and our service providing partners. Texas Workforce Solutions works with employers, economic development organizations and educators across the state to identify the needs of employers and connect them to a well-trained workforce.

TWC and its local Workforce Solutions partners look forward to the opportunity to better serve the needs of individuals in Texas with disabilities through the integration of vocational rehabilitation into its programs and services. These services will be referred to as Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services. DARS consumers will benefit from more direct access to an expanded network of employment connections. In many communities, staff at Texas Workforce Solutions are already working with Vocational Rehabilitation staff and have experience serving individuals with disabilities.

BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP

Vocational Rehabilitation and TWC

TWC and DARS both have a long history of connecting people with jobs. TWC has a history of providing integrated workforce services that help Texans seeking employment, while DARS history includes connecting job seekers with disabilities to employers seeking qualified employees. By joining forces, we will make a positive impact on employment opportunities for all Texans, including those with disabilities.

Moving VR services to TWC will mean:

- Services will be in one location, creating improved efficiencies through shared resources and leveraging purchasing power to better serve Texas communities.
- Workforce Solutions offices and vocational rehabilitation staff will train as cross-functional teams, developing a stronger partnership and creating improved outcomes for consumers.
- Access to a greater network of employers across the state.
- A coordinated effort to help all Texans find employment opportunities that will enable them to live independent lives.
- All six of the Texas programs funded through the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) will be together under one agency, TWC. *See more on this in the section entitled Federal reporting requirements.*
- A coordinated and expanded outreach and partnership with Texas businesses to provide employment and other services.



Key dates *and* News *on* Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) *transition* *to* Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)

September 29, 2015

Transition plan submitted www.twc.state.tx.us/files/news/dars-transition-plan-twc.pdf

September 1, 2016

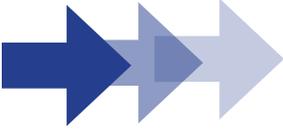
DARS Vocational Rehabilitation and other related programs will officially transfer to the Texas Workforce Commission.

October 1, 2017

TWC will consolidate the two separate VR programs for individuals with visual impairments and individuals with other disabilities into a single division.

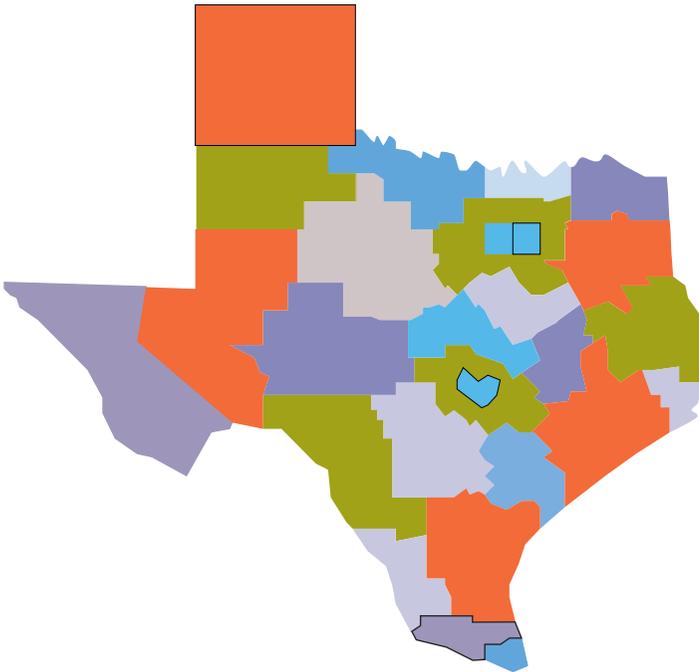
Co-location and integration of staff

Beginning in 2017, TWC will begin integrating Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff into Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) and Workforce Solutions Offices. VR staff will be co-located with Texas Workforce Solutions offices as current field office leases expire or can be renegotiated, and as Workforce Solutions office space is available and ready to accommodate the relocating individuals. Eventually, all VR program staff will be co-located within a Workforce Solutions office. Full integration of VR staff within the workforce system will continue over several years due to individual office logistics.



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**28 Local Workforce
Development Boards**
and our service providing partners.

REGIONAL WORKFORCE BOARD MAP



IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

General Facts

- DARS consumers will benefit from direct access to TWC's expanded network of employment connections.
- More than 1,860 DARS employees, including 700 VR counselors, will become part of TWC.
- Consumers will continue to receive the same services without interruption.
- The agencies will coordinate closely on the arrangement of office resources and computer systems shared between programs transferring to TWC and programs transferring to HHSC.

Long Term Plans

- Once the initial transfer is complete, TWC will begin to implement changes to the programs based on legislative action.
- While vocational rehabilitation counselors and other program staff will become TWC employees on September 1, 2016, most will continue to operate in their current locations until they can be fully integrated with Workforce Solutions offices.
- The general Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program and the VR program for people who are blind or visually impaired will be integrated into a single VR program that will be known as Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services. This change will happen on or before October 1, 2017.
- By August 31, 2018 most of the work toward the co-location of vocational rehabilitation staff and services with Workforce Solutions offices will be completed ensuring services are provided efficiently and effectively, as well as ensuring the best possible outcomes for consumers. TWC will ensure that accommodations, resources and space allocations meet the needs of VR consumers and counselors.

Due to varying lease expirations of current DARS field offices, this transition is likely to extend over the next several years. Throughout this time, the team approach to service delivery will continue as the focus.

LONG TERM PLANS

What does the transfer mean to consumers?

- Consumers working with current VR staff will continue after September 1, 2016, and their cases and services will be transferring with them to TWC. Consumer services will continue without interruption.
- DARS consumers will benefit from an expanded network of employment connections to prepare them for and connect them to employment including, job-search and career resources such as workshops, job fairs, résumé writing assistance, access to computers and assistance with WorkInTexas.com, TWC's job matching database. In FY 2015, more than 1.2 million Texas job seekers received employment services.
- New and returning consumers will receive the same great services under TWC administration.



What does the transfer mean to businesses?

- Texas Workforce Solutions staff and DARS Business Services team members will work in concert to expand their network of employers. Vocational Rehabilitation staff will be able to build on their expertise in educating and connecting employers to individuals with disabilities, as well as develop new employer partnerships.
- Under the new Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services, DARS Business Services team members will continue to provide employers with outreach services, consultation, job placement and retention assistance as they do today.
- Business service units from local Workforce Solutions offices also deliver customized services for employers including, development of workforce training programs, assistance with applicant screening and referrals, job fair hosting, and analysis of labor market information. In FY 2015, 88,811 employers received these and other outreach services through Local Workforce Development Boards.

Federal reporting requirements

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), was enacted July 22, 2014 and effectively replaces the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. WIOA authorizes and combines the following core programs under the workforce development system:

- Employment and training services for adults, dislocated workers and youth
- Wagner-Peyser employment services for job seekers, such as assessments, career guidance, employment referrals and access to labor market information
- Adult education and literacy programs
- Vocational Rehabilitation state grant programs that assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment



For the first time under WIOA, states are required to submit a single four-year plan for achieving the goals of all core workforce programs. WIOA calls for better integration of these programs at the state level to improve overall employment outcomes and requires a combined state plan encompassing outcomes for all programs using common performance measures. TWC and DARS are currently working together to meet the WIOA state plan requirements.

Other helpful resources

Contacts/Information

- **TWC** – www.texasworkforce.org
- **DARS** – www.dars.state.tx.us
Content from the DARS website will be migrated to the TWC website after September 1, 2016
- Texas Workforce Solutions Offices
To find a Workforce Solutions office near you:
www.texasworkforce.org/officelocator
- **Transition Webpage for DARS Vocational Rehabilitation programs to TWC**
www.texasworkforce.org/darstransition

Legislation relating to the transfer of DARS Programs and Services

- S.B. 200 – Abolishes DARS and transfers its functions to the Health and Human Services Commission on September 1, 2016.
www.capitol.state.tx.us/tlodocs/84R/billtext/doc/SB00200F.doc
- S.B. 208 – Transfers Vocational Rehabilitation and other related programs to the Texas Workforce Commission on September 1, 2016.
www.capitol.state.tx.us/tlodocs/84R/billtext/doc/SB00208F.doc

Inquires hotline: 800-628-5115

AS OF SEPTEMBER 1, 2016
**Texas Department of Assistive and
Rehabilitative Services (DARS)**
administrative mailing address will change to:

Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services
101 E. 15th St.
Austin, Texas 78778

Texas Workforce Solutions – Vocational Rehabilitation Services
administration physical address
4800 N. Lamar Blvd., Austin, TX 78756



TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION
101 East 15th Street • Austin, Texas 78778-0001
(512) 463-2222

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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WWW.TEXASWORKFORCE.ORG



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