



An Overview of the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)



Vision and Mission

Vision

A Texas where people with disabilities and families with children who have developmental delays enjoy the same opportunities as other Texans to pursue independent and productive lives

Mission

To work in partnership with Texans with disabilities and families with children who have developmental delays to improve the quality of their lives and to enable their full participation in society



DARS: Vocational Rehabilitation Program

DARS achieves its mission by assisting Texans with disabilities to:

- Find, retain, or advance in employment;
- Meet training and vocational goals; and
- Live independently in their communities.



Vocational Rehabilitation Purpose and Goal

- The goal of the federal Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program is for people with disabilities to find competitive integrated employment in the community.

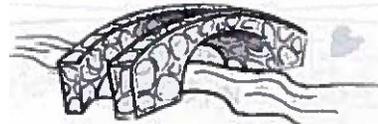
What is Vocational Rehabilitation?

Before Rehabilitation

- I hurt my back and can't do my job.
- I am going to lose my job because I can't hear well anymore.
- I have cerebral palsy and am unable to speak.
- How can I go somewhere I've never been or seen?
- I can't work because I'm blind.
- I can't do what "normal" people can do.



Physical Restoration



Assistive Technology



Communication Access



Orientation & Mobility



Vocational Rehab

After Rehabilitation

- After surgery and rehab, I can return to work.
- With my new hearing aids, I can now perform my job effectively.
- Now I can communicate using my communication device.
- I can have a career.
- I can go where I want and need to go.
- I can be whatever I decide to be.



Vocational Rehabilitation Service Delivery Structure

Texas provides VR services through two divisions at DARS that work in partnership:

- The Division for Blind Services (DBS) provides services to Texans who are blind or significantly visually impaired.
- The Division for Rehabilitation Services (DRS), provides services to Texans with ALL OTHER physical or mental disabilities.



Vocational Rehabilitation Service Delivery Structure

- VR services are provided by VR teams across Texas in over 140 locations.
- There are approximately 700 VR counselors.
- Teams are led by a counselor and include:
 - Rehabilitation Service Technicians,
 - VR Teachers,
 - Employment Assistance Specialists,
 - Business Relations Specialists,
 - Deaf/Blind Specialists,
 - Vocational Diagnostic Unit
 - Assistive Technology Unit
 - Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs)



Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

- Counselors have significant responsibilities in VR including:
 - Determining eligibility;
 - Providing counseling and guidance;
 - Understanding disabilities and what the possibilities are;
 - Knowing the community resources that are available; and
 - Understanding barriers to employment and how to mitigate them.
 - Developing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) which is a shared responsibility between the consumer and the counselor.
 - Understanding local and state Labor Markets



VR Process

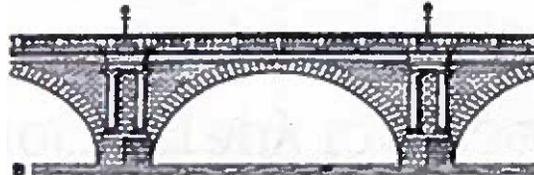
- Referral/Intake
- Application/Profile
- Eligibility
- Plan Development
- Active Services
- Employment
- Successful Closure

A Dual Customer Focus

Consumer

1. Assessment
2. Eligibility
3. IPE Development
4. Activities
 - a. Education & Training
 - b. Job Coaching
5. Employment
6. Rehabilitation

VRTeam



Business

1. Personalized Contact
2. Jobsite Assessments
3. Job Analysis
4. Consultation
 - a. Accommodation Assistance
 - b. Diversity Presentations
5. On-site Training
6. Follow-up Services
7. On-going Availability

Goal: To achieve competitive integrated employment that meets the consumers goals and abilities

- Evaluations and assessments
- Treatment and/or therapy to lessen or remove the disability
- Counseling and guidance
- Transition services
- Postsecondary education and training
- Training to learn job skills and appropriate work behaviors



VR Services, continued

- Rehabilitation technology devices/services to improve job functioning
- Job placement assistance and supported employment services
- Job retention services
- Follow-up after job placement to ensure job success
- Assistance with developing a small business or self employment



The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

- Reauthorizes and modifies the Workforce Investment Act, including the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.
- Signed into law on July 22, 2014. VR changes become effective the same day.
- Final regulations expected in June 2016.

The biggest changes to VR address the Congressional finding that...

- Many students with disabilities are leaving secondary school without competitive integrated employment or being enrolled in postsecondary education, and
- There is a need to support such students as they transition from school to postsecondary life.

WIOA requires that Texas spend:

- 15% of the federal VR grant on Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for individuals meeting the “student with a disability” definition in the law.
- 50% of Supported Employment grant on individuals meeting the “youth with a disability” definition

There are 5 core Pre-ETS Services

Job Exploration Counseling, which may include Academic Assessments and Vocational Counseling and Guidance.

Work-Based Learning Experiences, which may include in-school and after-school opportunities and experiences outside of the traditional school settings.

- **Counseling on Post-Secondary Opportunities**, which may include Vocational Counseling and Guidance and Academic Assessments.
- **Workplace Readiness Training** for the development of social skills and independent living skills. This may include Job Readiness Training and Life Skills Training.
- **Training on Self-Advocacy**, which may also include Peer Mentoring, Self-Determination Training and Life Skills Training.

VR Consumers

Average Age: 36 Gender: 55% male 45% female

Primary Disability-Based on FFY2014	Total Consumers	Percent*
<u>Intellectual/Cognitive</u>	<u>20,916</u>	<u>26%</u>
<u>Neurological/Musculoskeletal/Orthopedic</u>	<u>19,782</u>	<u>25%</u>
<u>Mental/Emotional/Psychosocial</u>	<u>14,905</u>	<u>19%</u>
<u>Deaf & Hard of Hearing</u>	<u>12,246</u>	<u>15%</u>
<u>Other Physical Debilitation or Impairment</u>	<u>6,302</u>	<u>8%</u>
<u>Substance Abuse</u>	<u>2,257</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>Traumatic Brain Injury/Spinal Cord Injury</u>	<u>2,197</u>	<u>3%</u>
<u>Cardiac/Respiratory/Circulatory</u>	<u>1,611</u>	<u>2%</u>
<u>All Other Impairments</u>	<u>259</u>	<u>0%</u>
<u>Blind/Visually Impaired</u>	<u>10,574</u>	<u>100%</u>
TOTAL FOR DRS	80,475	100%
TOTAL FOR DBS	10,574	100%



2015 VR Outcomes

Number of Consumers Served:	91,049
Number of Consumers Employed:	14,627
FFY 2014:	
Average Hourly Earnings:	\$12.21/hour
Consumer Satisfaction:	exceeds 90%

- For every dollar spent on vocational rehabilitation, consumers generate **nearly \$8.00** in personal taxable income through the remainder of their work lives.
- By retirement, the average rehabilitated consumer will have repaid the cost of services at least three times through taxes paid.



VR Consumer Careers

OCCUPATION-Based on FFY2014	PERCENT* DRS/DBS
<u>Service</u>	<u>25%</u> <u>17%</u>
<u>Office & Administrative Support</u>	<u>22%</u> <u>14%</u>
<u>Transportation & Material Moving</u>	<u>9%</u> <u>5%</u>
<u>Sales & Related</u>	<u>8%</u> <u>8%</u>
<u>Education, Legal, Community Service, Arts, and Media</u>	<u>8%</u> <u>10%</u>
<u>Healthcare Practitioners, Technical, & Healthcare Support</u>	<u>7%</u> <u>8%</u>
<u>Production</u>	<u>6%</u> <u>8%</u>
<u>Management, Business, and Financial</u>	<u>5%</u> <u>9%</u>
<u>Installation, Maintenance, and Repair</u>	<u>5%</u> <u>4%</u>
<u>Construction and Extraction</u>	<u>3%</u> <u>5%</u>
<u>All Other Occupations</u>	<u>2%</u> <u>12%</u>
TOTAL FOR DRS	100%
TOTAL FOR DBS	100%

Conclusion

Partnership



Work



Texas High Schools

Employers

Community Colleges

Parents & Advocates



Education Service Centers





Contact Information

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VR Process

INITIAL CONTACT

A consumer's first contact with DARS is a critical point in the VR process. Information is obtained to understand the consumer's needs, and identify and explain the purpose of the DARS program that seems most suited to meet those needs. Any consumer who contacts DARS for a service will need to make no more than one stop/contact to get started; this is referred to as the 'No Wrong Door' guideline. DARS staff will take the needed consumer information and coordinate access to services with other divisions.

APPLICANT PHASE

The **APPLICATION** for services is completed and followed by the diagnostic interview (DI). The DI is completed by the counselor with the consumer and serves to frame the preliminary assessment that is required to determine the consumer's **ELIGIBILITY** for services. The DI includes discussion and documentation of:

- Disabilities and functional limitations
- History of employment, education, personal, and legal issues that may affect employment
- Consumer's perception of problems or issues resulting from disability
- Counselor's observations
- Medical or other resource involvement if available
- SSI/SSDI status: check for presumptive eligibility
- Next steps: Assessments needed for eligibility and plan development

Ineligibility

Case is closed as ineligible for services. Reason for closure is documented and consumer is notified of closure.

Eligibility

Consumer meets eligibility criteria if:

- 1) they have a physical or mental impairment;
- 2) this impairment constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment
- 3) require VR services to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain employment; and
- 4)) Can achieve an employment outcome.

Closure

Case is closed prior to developing an IPE. Reason for closure is documented and consumer is notified of closure.

INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT (IPE) DEVELOPMENT PHASE

ASSESSING and PLANNING identifies those vocational rehabilitation services that are reasonable and necessary to select the employment goals and the nature and scope of VR services that will be outlined on the IPE. The IPE is based on the consumer's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice, including the need for supported employment.

Closure

Case is closed after completion of an IPE. Reason for closure is documented and consumer is notified of closure.

ACTIVE PHASE

- ⇒ Individualized planned services are provided to facilitate consumers reaching their employment goals.
- ⇒ Counseling and Guidance is provided throughout the case.
- ⇒ The consumer remains actively involved in services and has regular contact with counselor.
- ⇒ Progress reviews or amendments to IPE's are completed annually or any time there is a significant change in nature and scope of planned services or goals.
- ⇒ All services are provided need to be required for consumers to reach their employment outcome, based on the comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs.

EMPLOYMENT PHASE

Consumer reaches their employment outcome

- ⇒ Consumer is employed in a job that is consistent with their IPE goal.
- ⇒ Consumer is satisfied with their job.
- ⇒ All planned services have been completed.

SUCCESSFUL CLOSURE

Consumer reaches their employment outcome

- ⇒ Consumer reaches 90 days of employment in job consistent with their IPE goal.
- ⇒ The counselor contacts the consumer to verify that they are in agreement with closure.
- ⇒ Employment is verified.
- ⇒ Case file is closed and consumer is notified (letter).

Post Closure

Services provided after successful closure to maintain or regain employment.