# Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual B-200: Processing Initial Contacts and Applications

Revised July 1, 2021

## B-204: Application

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### B-204-1: Application Process

Any individual who wants to apply for VR services must be allowed to do so. VR staff may not deny an application to an individual for any reason.

When appropriate, the VR staff uses the Application Appointment Letter in RHW to schedule the appointment. This ensures that a record of this appointment is captured in RHW. If RHW is not available, VR staff schedules the appointment and completes the Application Appointment Letter in RHW as soon as it is available.

If the customer does not have all the information listed below, VR staff must not delay scheduling or completing the application for services. The customer is encouraged but not required to bring the following information, which will assist in completing the application and moving the case through the VR process:

* photo identification (for example, a driver's license, state-issued ID, school ID, passport, or military ID) and Social Security card;
* names and addresses of doctors seen recently;
* names and addresses of schools attended;
* information about medical insurance, including Medicaid and Medicare;
* a list of the customer's places of employment, including the type of job, dates of employment, reason for leaving, and salary;
* if currently employed, documentation showing employment start date (for example, pay stub identifying start date, self-employment worksheets indicating start date, or verification from the employer via email, fax, or letter verification);
* proof of income information for the customer and proof of income for the customer's spouse or parents, if the spouse or parents claim the customer as a dependent on their federal income tax (for example, a copy of the most recent pay statement, an award letter for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or another Title II disability benefit or Veterans Affairs (VA) benefit, or a Notice of Payment for workers' compensation);
* proof of expenses related to the customer's monthly mortgage or rental payments, prescribed diets and medicines, debts imposed by court order, medical costs, and disability related expenses;
* names, addresses, and phone numbers of two individuals who can contact the customer;
* reports of recent medical exams, school records, or other information that may help VR understand the customer's disability; and
* the customer's Ticket to Work, if the customer is receiving SSDI benefits and has been issued one.

Note: A customer who is eligible for Social Security disability benefits (SSI or SSDI) provides only proof of Social Security eligibility. The law exempts recipients of Social Security disability benefits from the requirement to participate in the cost of VR services regardless of income, so no additional proof of income or expenses is required. For more information, refer to [VRSM D-203-4: Customer Participation in the Cost of Services](https://www.twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d203-4).

An option called "fast track" is available to complete the RHW application for returning customers when:

* it is within a year from when their previous case was closed; and
* the customer has the same disability as in their previous closed case.

Fast track will copy some of the customer's application information from the previous case to the new case. VR staff must verify all information including any wages and monthly financial information to ensure that the copied information is still accurate.

The VR staff member who is taking the application for services provides copies of the following:

* VR5057, VR Program Application Statement with the customer's signature from the RHW Application page,
* "Can We Talk? Appeal Procedures for Applicants and Customers," which explains VR's appeal and mediation procedures
* "A Guide for Applicants," which explains:
	+ services and outcomes;
	+ options for developing the IPE;
	+ components of the IPE;
	+ the customer's right to appeal; and
	+ services available from the Client Assistance Program.

VR staff explains the basic content of each of the documents and their purpose to the customer. A case note is entered in RHW documenting the date and method the information was provided to the customer.

The application must be completed in a location that is private enough to maintain the confidentiality of the information provided by the customer.

During the meeting, VR staff:

* explains to the customer:
	+ the purpose and expected outcomes of vocational rehabilitation;
	+ VR expectations of the customer;
	+ the roles of the VR counselor and customer; and
	+ the customer's rights;
* explains to the customer the circumstances under which the customer's personal information is released;
* obtains the signatures required on the application and all other required forms, including the following to allow VR to collect and disclose information:
	+ [VR5061, Notice and Consent for Disclosure of Personal Information](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/gl/html/vocational_rehab_forms.html);
	+ [VR5060, Permission to Collect Information](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/gl/html/vocational_rehab_forms.html) (if needed);
	+ [VR1517-2, Authorization for Release of Confidential Customer Records and Information](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/gl/html/vocational_rehab_forms.html) (if needed); and
	+ One [SSA-3288, Consent for Release of Information](https://intra.twc.texas.gov/intranet/vrs/html/benefitsplanning.html) to obtain a Benefits Planning Query (BPQY) for SSI/SSDI recipients (if needed);
* offers the customer the opportunity to register to vote following the procedures in [A-212-1: Voter Registration Procedures](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-a-200%22%20%5Cl%20%22a212-1) and documents in a case note that voter registration services were provided;
* explains in detail the expected outcomes and services related to the VR; and
* gathers, reviews, and documents the information necessary to determine whether the customer is eligible for services.

Note: For more information on completing the SSA-3288, refer to the [Supplemental Security Income (SSI) / Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Benefits Planning intranet page](https://intra.twc.texas.gov/intranet/vrs/html/benefitsplanning.html).

Refer to [VRSM A-210: PIN and Signature Procedures](https://www.twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-a-200#a210) for more information on signatures.

The information for the application may be entered into RHW by any VR staff.

When RHW is not available, VR staff:

* prints (when a printer is available) a paper copy of the [VR5056, Application for Vocational Rehabilitation Services](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), and records the information by hand or completes the form electronically;
* obtains signatures on the completed VR5056 per [VRSM A-210-5: Signature Procedures](https://www.twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-a-200#a210-5);
* transfers the information from the VR5056 into RHW as soon as RHW is available (Note: The signature dates that are entered in RHW must match the signature dates that are on the VR5056.);
* keeps a copy of the paper application in the case file after the data has been entered in RHW;
* files the signed forms according to procedures in [D-303: Case File Organization](https://www.twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-300#d303); and
* mails or emails the customer a copy of the VR5057, VR Program Application Statement with the customer’s signature from the RHW Application page.

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### B-204-2: Customer Identification and Authorization for Employment

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#### State Office Consultation Required

If a customer presents documents not listed on [DHS Form I-9 Acceptable Documents](https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/acceptable-documents/list-documents/form-i-9-acceptable-documents) to prove their identity and/or employment authorization, email the following to the state office policy team at vrsm.support@twc.state.tx.us:

* customer name and case ID; and
* copies of the documents presented.

If the state office policy team is not able to determine the validity of the documents, state office staff will contact TWC Office of General Counsel for review and consultation. This must be completed before the customer can be determined eligible for VR services.

After the customer's documents are determined by staff or TWC Office of General Counsel to be valid, the type and expiration of the customer's identity and employment authorization must be documented in a case note.

#### Purchasing

After the customer provides an acceptable list C document to confirm the customer’s employment authorization and otherwise meets the eligibility requirements as outlined in [B-303: Eligibility Criteria for VR Services](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-300%22%20%5Cl%20%22b303), the VR counselor may authorize the purchase of a state issued driver’s license or ID card for the customer, if needed to help make an eligibility determination or for the customer to participate in VR services.

For information on renewing and/or obtaining a Texas driver's license or ID card from the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), see the [Driver License & ID's](https://www.dps.texas.gov/section/driver-license) section of the DPS website.

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#### Expired Identity Documents

Expired identity verification documents, such as a driver’s license or identification card issued by federal, state or local government agencies or entities, cannot be used to determine customer eligibility for VR services.

After eligibility for VR services has been determined, if the customer is a U.S. citizen or is authorized to work in the United States and the customer’s identity verification documents expire, these documents do not need to be updated to continue participation in VR services. However, if the customer’s case is closed for any reason, the customer will be required to provide unexpired identify verification documents to reapply for VR services. The customer should be advised that employers require unexpired documents and should be encouraged to update these documents in a timely manner. This communication can be documented as a counseling and guidance session.

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