# PART A, CHAPTER 3.3.a:SPECIFIC POPULATIONS – OVERVIEW

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| **Policy Number** | **Authority** | **Scope**  | **Effective Date** |
| Part A, Chapter 3.3.a | N/A | All TWC-VR staff | 9/3/2024 |

## PURPOSE

In accordance with the authority (Federal and State) listed above, this policy is issued by the Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation Division (TWC-VR). Adherence to these rules and regulations issued under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), supports Texans with disabilities in gaining, maintaining, and advancing in competitive integrated employment (CIE).

Specifically, the purpose of this policy and these procedures is to ensure adherence to TWC-VR's handling of specific populations, including applicable resources, disability needs, and TWC-VR services.

## DEFINITIONS

Blindness: Visual acuity with best correction of 20/200 or less in the better eye, a visual field of 20 degrees or less, or a combination of both.

Low Vision: Visual acuity with best correction of 20/70 or less in the better eye, a visual field of 30 degrees or less in the better eye, or a combination of both.

Neurodevelopmental Disorders: Term that encompasses autism, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, intellectual disabilities, or specific learning disabilities.

Significant Visual Impairment: A disease or condition of the eye that does not meet the definitions of blind or low vision but does create a significant impediment to employment and cannot be corrected with glasses or contact lenses.

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI): Financial assistance to individuals who are unable to work due to a significant disability. Designed as a safety net for workers who have paid into the Social Security system through payroll taxes, SSDI benefits are based on an individual's work history and earnings record.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI): Needs-based disability benefits paid to disabled individuals who have limited income and resources. Disability benefits under SSI include 1) Childhood SSI (for those under age 18) and 2) SSI Adult Disabled/Blind (for those age 18 to 65).

Veteran: An individual who served in the active military, naval, or air service and was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. This includes a member of the National Guard or reserve components who is activated for Federal military service and serves the full period of activation.

Visual Impairment: Global term that encompasses blindness, low vision, and significant visual impairment.

## POLICY

### General Overview

In addition to providing services to eligible individuals with disabilities, TWC-VR provides services and support to individuals with specific disabilities who will benefit from working with VR Counselors and TWC-VR staff with specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities. TWC-VR staff specialization improves successful competitive integrated employment outcomes for these customers.

Specific populations include, but are not limited to, the following:

* Individuals who are blind or significantly visually impaired;
* Individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders, including—
	+ Autism;
	+ Attention deficit /hyperactivity disorders;
	+ Intellectual and developmental disabilities; and
	+ Specific learning disabilities;
* Individuals with mental health disorders;
* Individuals from minority backgrounds;
* Veterans with disabilities;
* Social Security recipients and beneficiaries; and
* Subminimum wage recipients.

While specialized caseloads are not available in every TWC-VR office, specialized supports are available statewide. The information in this policy provides a brief overview of the following specific customer populations.

* Individuals with Disabilities Who Are Minorities: TWC-VR engages in numerous programs and activities designed to inform and make available TWC-VR and supported employment services to minorities and those who have the most significant disabilities.
* Blind and Visually Impaired: Individuals who are eligible for TWC-VR services and are blind or have a visual impairment as their primary disability are seen by a VR Counselor who specializes in working with individuals with blindness and visual impairments.
* Neurodevelopmental Disorders: A neurodevelopmental disorder is defined as autism, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, intellectual disabilities, or specific learning disabilities. TWC-VR services provided specifically for these types of disabilities include, but are not limited to, the following:
	+ Employment Specialists with the Autism Endorsement;
	+ Autism Spectrum Disorder Support; and
	+ Environmental Work Assessment.
* Veterans: Regardless of their eligibility for services from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), veteran customers with disabilities may benefit from TWC-VR services.
* Social Security Recipients and Beneficiaries: A customer receiving SSI or SSDI or another Title II disability benefit due to their own disability must be given unique considerations during the VR process, including presumptive eligibility for TWC-VR services.
* Ticket to Work Program**:** Ticket to Work Program (TTW) is a voluntary program administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA) for customers aged 18 to 65 who receive SSA disability benefits.
* Subminimum Wage Recipients: Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act, as added by the amendments to the WIOA, requires employers that hold special wage certificates under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) to comply with certain requirements. WIOA mandates that these requirements be satisfied before the employers can hire youth with disabilities at subminimum wages or continue to employ individuals with disabilities of any age at subminimum wage. Individuals with disabilities, regardless of age, must receive Career Counseling and Information and Referral (CCI&R) services designed to promote opportunities for competitive integrated employment in order to be employed at subminimum wage (wages less than the Federal minimum wage).
* Students and Youth with Disabilities: Under WIOA, TWC-VR is tasked with enhancing TWC-VR services to youth with disabilities, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities transitioning from high school to postsecondary education or employment. TWC-VR also provides supported employment (SE) services to youth and individuals with significant disabilities needing ongoing support in maintaining employment.

Through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), data sharing enables better assessment of the number of potentially eligible students that could receive Pre-ETS. TWC-VR actively engages in outreach to inform education agencies, community partners, families, youths, and students about TWC-VR transition services and Pre-ETS availability statewide and collaboration opportunities with schools under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

TWC-VR policies and procedures are applied uniformly to all customers, regardless of classification of "specialized population."

## PROCEDURES

There are no procedures for this policy.

## APPROVALS & CONSULTATIONS

There are no approvals or consultations for this policy and these procedures.

**REVIEW**

The Policy Planning and Statewide Initiatives Team, or designee, is responsible for reviewing this policy and these procedures and will update the Document History log if necessary.

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