# PART C, CHAPTER 12.4.a: VR COUNSELOR-DIRECTED PLACEMENT SERVICES

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| **Policy Number** | **Authority** | **Scope** | **Effective Date** |
| Part C, Chapter 12.4.a | 34 CFR [§361.48(b)(12)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/part-361#p-361.48(b)(12)), and TWC RULE [§856.49](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=20&ch=856&rl=49) | All TWC-VR staff, particularly VR Counselors | 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 the provision of VR Counselor-directed job placement services for TWC-VR customers.

## DEFINITIONS

Competitive Wages: The level of compensation offered to employees that is comparable to or higher than the average wages for similar positions in the same industry or geographic area. These wages are designed to attract and retain skilled workers by providing them with salaries that are attractive relative to what other employers are offering.

Informed Choice: The means by which a customer chooses their rehabilitation path, from options based on their needs and circumstances and the TWC-VR rules, as it relates to choosing job placement services and the providers of those services.

Integrated Setting: Setting typically found in the community in which the customer interacts with non-disabled individuals, not including non-disabled individuals who are providing their services (e.g., job coach).

## POLICY

### General Overview

VR Counselor-directed job placement services play a crucial role in the successful outcomes for their customers. These services are designed to assist customers in securing suitable employment that matches their skills, interests, and abilities, ultimately leading to improved economic self-sufficiency and quality of life.

The intent of VR Counselor direct job placement services include, but are not limited to—

* Employment Acquisition: Facilitating job placements that align with the customer's employment goals and abilities.
* Job Retention: Ensuring that customers have the necessary support and resources to maintain employment.
* Career Advancement: Providing opportunities for customers to progress in their chosen career paths.
* Increased Independence: Enhancing the customer's ability to live independently through gainful employment.
* Economic Self-Sufficiency: Enabling customers to achieve financial stability through meaningful work.

Examples of these services include, but are not limited to, the following—

* Individualized Job Search Assistance: VR Counselors work one-on-one with customers to develop a tailored job search strategy. This includes identifying potential employers, preparing resumes, and practicing interview skills.
* Job Matching and Placement: VR Counselors help match customers with suitable job openings, considering their skills, interests, and work environment preferences. They may also facilitate introductions to potential employers.
* Work Readiness Training: VR Counselors can provide training on essential work skills, such as time management, communication, and workplace etiquette, to prepare them for the demands of the job.
* On-the-Job Support: VR Counselors provide ongoing support once a client has been placed in a job. This can include post-employment services, accommodations, and regular check-ins to ensure the customers adjusting well and addressing any issues that arise.
* Employer Engagement and Education: VR Counselors often work with employers to educate them about the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities and to provide guidance on creating inclusive workplaces.
* Follow-Up Services: After job placement, counselors may continue to offer support to ensure long-term success. This can include additional training, career counseling, and assistance with career advancement opportunities.
* Coordination with Other Providers: VR Counselors collaborate with other service providers, such as mental health professionals, educational institutions, and community organizations, to offer comprehensive support tailored to each customers unique needs.

### Additional Policy Considerations

* Comparable Services and Benefits: VR direct placement services are exempt from the requirement to secure comparable services and benefits prior to TWC-VR expending funds.
* Customer Participation in the Cost of Services: VR direct placement services are exempt from applying Basic Living Requirements (BLR) and, therefore, the customer is not required to participate in the cost of services.
* Recipients of Social Security Disability Benefits: Recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), due to the customer’s disability, are exempt from the requirement to participate in the cost of TWC-VR services regardless of income.
* Exceptions to Policy: When necessary to meet the VR needs of a customer, TWC-VR staff members may request exceptions to policies and procedures through their chain of management up to the Deputy Division Director of Field Services Delivery, or designee. However, exceptions to policies and procedures based on Federal and State laws, statutes, and rules or regulations are not allowable.

## PROCEDURES

### Determining the Need for Employment Services

VR Counselors partner with their customers to determine what level of support they require in order to be successful in their job search. When determined that the VR Counselor direct placement services are sufficient, they are included in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) or IPE amendment.

When additional services are necessary, the VR Counselor can also purchase Non-Bundled Job Placement services, Job Skills Training (JST) services, On-the-Job Training (OJT) services or services from the Business Relations Team (BRT).

### Role of the Customer

The role of the customer in the VR process is to consider information and make informed choices about services that the customer believes will help them achieve a successful employment outcome. Customers should be actively involved in developing an IPE with the help of a VR Counselor.

Customers must—

* Attend meetings with the VR Counselor and other staff members;
* Attend scheduled appointments with service providers and prospective employers;
* Communicate issues to the VR Counselor and participate in problem solving;
* Make and implement decisions;
* Identify needed resources; and
* Expect to work in a competitive integrated employment (CIE) situation that is consistent with their unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

### Role of the Counselor

The primary role of a VR Counselor in the provision of employment services is to ensure that customers reach their employment goals. The VR Counselor arranges, purchases, and/or provides the employment services included in the customer's IPE in a timely manner and ensures that services meet both agency standards and customer needs.

The VR Counselor also monitors a customer's progress and provides feedback, VR counseling and guidance, and encouragement. As needed, the VR Counselor recommends changes or adjustments to the IPE based on the customer's circumstances and progress.

Although a customer's IPE or IPE amendment may include purchased employment services through a provider, the VR Counselor must remain actively involved with the customer and the provider throughout the duration of the employment services.

TWC-VR staff should maintain monthly contact with the customer and the employment services provider (ESP). TWC-VR staff must document these contacts and the customer's progress in case notes.

### VR Counselor-Directed Placement Services

In counselor-directed placement, the VR Counselor coordinates the job placement process utilizing services and supports that are arranged for or provided directly to the customer. These services may be provided by the VR Counselor or by other TWC-VR staff.

Counselor-directed placement services are appropriate for customers who demonstrate the following characteristics:

* Receptive to VR counseling and guidance;
* Effective communication skills;
* Self-initiative to follow through on tasks independently;
* Requests assistance or direction as needed;
* Independently uses time management techniques to achieve goals related to attainment of employment;
* Problem-solving skills to address issues related to employment and disability management;
* Participates independently in job clubs or classes to prepare for employment; and
* Appropriate grooming and attire for job search and employment.

In counselor-directed placement services, the VR Counselor ensures the customer receives as much assistance as needed to reach their IPE employment goal. Areas that may be addressed by VR Counselors and other TWC-VR staff, as qualified, as part of counselor-directed placement services include the following:

* Collection of employment and education data;
* Identification of transferable skills;
* Identification of employment barriers;
* Completion of job applications;
* Development of resumes, references, and cover letters;
* Interview preparation;
* Job search and job placement;
* Pre-employment testing;
* Salary and position negotiation;
* Acceptance of job offers;
* Worksite accommodations; and
* Disability disclosure.

Roles of TWC-VR staff in counselor-directed placement services include the following:

* Acting as a mentor and coach to develop the customer's skills in finding, obtaining, and keeping a job;
* Monitoring the customer's job search progress;
* Coordinating with the Business Relations Team to support the customer in competing in the labor market;
* Facilitating job clubs or providing resources for classes at Workforce Solutions Offices or other community locations to help customers obtain competitive integrated employment;
* Contacting prospective employers to identify and develop job opportunities for the customer;
* Conducting job searches by using TWC's [WorkInTexas.com](https://www.workintexas.com/vosnet/Default.aspx) and other job listings that are available; and/or
* Sharing job leads with the customer.

## 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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| **Date** | **Type** | **Change Description** |
| 9/3/2024 | New | VRSM Policy and Procedure Rewrite |