# PART C, CHAPTER 4: INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

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| **Policy Number** | **Authority** | **Scope** | **Effective Date** |
| Part C, Chapter 4 | 34 CFR [§361.37](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/section-361.37), [§361.48(b)(4)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/part-361#p-361.48(b)(4)), and TWC Rule [§856.42](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=42) | 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 ensuring customers have access to all community resources and organizational benefits that are appropriate to address their needs.

## DEFINITIONS

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.

## POLICY

### General Overview

Information and referral services are provided by TWC-VR to ensure that customers have access to all community resources and organizational benefits. TWC-VR staff provide information and referral services to customers as needed, throughout the VR process. These services could be provided by other appropriate Federal and State programs, including other agencies within TWC. The TWC-VR staff must explain to the customer the nature and purpose of the information and the reason for each referral (e.g., comparable benefit, services not provided by TWC-VR).

Though this service is provided by TWC-VR staff, at no cost, it is substantial and can result in short- and long-term positive impacts for the customer. This service can be provided to customers prior to the development of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE); however, it is included in the IPE once developed.

### Additional Policy Considerations

* Comparable Services and Benefits: Information and referral 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: Information and referral 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

### Types of Programs

TWC-VR staff provide information and referral services to appropriate programs and service providers best suited to address the specific rehabilitation, independent living, and employment needs of the customer.

Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

* Housing;
* Food and general assistance;
* Social Security Administration;
* FAFSA and other educational resources;
* Texas Workforce Commission;
* Adult education agencies;
* Developmental disability agencies;
* Mental health providers;
* Insurance programs (e.g. Medicaid);
* Disability resource centers; and
* Independent living centers.

When needed, TWC-VR staff can use the [Texas 211: Information and Referral Network (Finding Help in Texas)](https://www.211texas.org/) to assist in identifying available resources.

### Referral Documentation

When a customer is referred for services to Federal or State programs, including services provided by TWC, documentation must include the following:

* Notice of the referral;
* Information and advice that was provided regarding the most suitable services to assist the customer to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain CIE; and
* Information identifying a specific point of contact within the agency to which the customer is being referred.

### Customers Choosing Not to Pursue CIE

When TWC-VR staff are providing information and referral services to a customer who makes an informed choice not to pursue an employment outcome in CIE, the following information must be provided to the customer and documented in a case note:

* Purpose of the VR program;
* Availability of employment options, and of TWC-VR services available to assist the customer in achieving an appropriate employment outcome;
* Option for TWC-VR services to be provided in an extended employment setting if necessary for purposes of training or otherwise preparing for employment in an integrated setting;
* Customer's right to reapply for services if they decide to pursue an employment outcome in CIE in the future; and
* Benefits planning services to obtain information concerning the ability to work while receiving benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA).

### Case Closure

When the VR Counselor closes the case before eligibility, information and referral services must be provided if—

* The customer is available and needs other services;
* Those services are available from another agency or program; and/or
* The customer provides an *Authorization for Release of Confidential Customer Records and Information (VR1517-2)*; the VR Counselor may contact the agency or program, set up an appointment for the customer, and provide the agency or program with information requested about the customer, when appropriate.

## 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 |