# Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual Section B-500

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## Notes on the Manual

On October 1, 2017, Texas Workforce Commission’s Blind Services Division and Rehabilitation Services Division combined to create a single designated state unit (DSU) to administer the vocational rehabilitation program for Texans with disabilities.

The combined Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual (VRSM) was initially published on October 1, 2017. The latest update to this manual is reflected in the chapters below.

Please note that VRSM includes links to information that is intended to provide additional decision-making supports to VR staff. Some of this information may not be available to individuals who are accessing the VRSM outside of TWC's firewall. Copies of materials that cannot be accessed directly through links can be made available upon request.

Substantive revisions to the content are noted in the VRSM List of Revisions. Any printed versions may not contain the latest policy changes.

If you have any questions about VRSM content, please contact the TWC Vocational Rehabilitation Division Policy Team at state office by sending an email message to vrsm.support@twc.texas.gov.

## Manual Overview

The VR Services Manual:

* helps ensure VR customers receive quality services to assist them in achieving successful competitive integrated employment outcomes as a result of their participation in vocational rehabilitation services.;
* helps to ensure taxpayer funds are spent wisely and each purchase paid for with public funds represents full value to the taxpayer; and
* provides published policies and procedures for maintaining compliance with federal and state laws, statutes, and rules or regulations.

The latest update to this manual is reflected in the chapters below. Any printed versions may not contain the latest policy changes.

# Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual B-500: Individualized Plan for Employment and Post-Employment

## Introduction

The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) outlines the nature and scope of vocational rehabilitation services that are required to help the customer reach a specific competitive, integrated employment goal that is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

## B-501: Legal Authorization

**34 CFR §361.45 Development of the individualized plan for employment.**

(a) General requirements. The vocational rehabilitation services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must assure that—

(1) An individualized plan for employment meeting the requirements of this section and §361.46 is developed and implemented in a timely manner for each individual determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services or, if the designated State unit is operating under an order of selection in accordance with §361.36, for each eligible individual to whom the State unit is able to provide services; and

(2) Services will be provided in accordance with the provisions of the individualized plan for employment.

(b) Purpose. (1) The designated State unit must conduct an assessment for determining vocational rehabilitation needs, if appropriate, for each eligible individual or, if the State is operating under an order of selection, for each eligible individual to whom the State is able to provide services. The purpose of this assessment is to determine the employment outcome, and the nature and scope of vocational rehabilitation services to be included in the individualized plan for employment.

(2) The individualized plan for employment must be designed to achieve a specific employment outcome, as defined in §361.5(c) (15), that is selected by the individual consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

(c) Required information. The State unit must provide the following information to each eligible individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative, in writing and, if appropriate, in the native language or mode of communication of the individual or the individual's representative:

(1) Options for developing an individualized plan for employment. Information on the available options for developing the individualized plan for employment, including the option that an eligible individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative may develop all or part of the individualized plan for employment—

(i) Without assistance from the State unit or other entity; or

(ii) With assistance from—

(A) A qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor employed by the State unit;

(B) A qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor who is not employed by the State unit;

(C) A disability advocacy organization; or

(D) Resources other than those in paragraph (c)(1)(ii)(A) through (C) of this section.

(2) Additional information. Additional information to assist the eligible individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative in developing the individualized plan for employment, including—

(i) Information describing the full range of components that must be included in an individualized plan for employment;

(ii) As appropriate to each eligible individual—

(A) An explanation of agency guidelines and criteria for determining an eligible individual's financial commitments under an individualized plan for employment;

(B) Information on the availability of assistance in completing State unit forms required as part of the individualized plan for employment; and

(C) Additional information that the eligible individual requests or the State unit determines to be necessary to the development of the individualized plan for employment;

(iii) A description of the rights and remedies available to the individual, including, if appropriate, recourse to the processes described in §361.57; and

(iv) A description of the availability of a client assistance program established under part 370 of this chapter and information on how to contact the client assistance program.

(3) Individuals entitled to benefits under title II or XVI of the Social Security Act. For individuals entitled to benefits under title II or XVI of the Social Security Act on the basis of a disability or blindness, the State unit must provide to the individual general information on additional supports and assistance for individuals with disabilities desiring to enter the workforce, including assistance with benefits planning.

(d) Mandatory procedures. The designated State unit must ensure that—

(1) The individualized plan for employment is a written document prepared on forms provided by the State unit;

(2) The individualized plan for employment is developed and implemented in a manner that gives eligible individuals the opportunity to exercise informed choice, consistent with §361.52, in selecting—

(i) The employment outcome, including the employment setting;

(ii) The specific vocational rehabilitation services needed to achieve the employment outcome, including the settings in which services will be provided;

(iii) The entity or entities that will provide the vocational rehabilitation services; and

(iv) The methods available for procuring the services;

(3) The individualized plan for employment is—

(i) Agreed to and signed by the eligible individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative; and

(ii) Approved and signed by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor employed by the designated State unit;

(4) A copy of the individualized plan for employment and a copy of any amendments to the individualized plan for employment are provided to the eligible individual or, as appropriate, to the individual's representative, in writing and, if appropriate, in the native language or mode of communication of the individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative;

(5) The individualized plan for employment is reviewed at least annually by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor and the eligible individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative to assess the eligible individual's progress in achieving the identified employment outcome;

(6) The individualized plan for employment is amended, as necessary, by the individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative, in collaboration with a representative of the State unit or a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor (to the extent determined to be appropriate by the individual), if there are substantive changes in the employment outcome, the vocational rehabilitation services to be provided, or the providers of the vocational rehabilitation services;

(7) Amendments to the individualized plan for employment do not take effect until agreed to and signed by the eligible individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative and by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor employed by the designated State unit;

(8) The individualized plan for employment is amended, as necessary, to include the postemployment services and service providers that are necessary for the individual to maintain, advance in or regain employment, consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice; and

(9) An individualized plan for employment for a student with a disability is developed—

(i) In consideration of the student's individualized education program or 504 services, as applicable; and

(ii) In accordance with the plans, policies, procedures, and terms of the interagency agreement required under §361.22.

(e) Standards for developing the individualized plan for employment. The individualized plan for employment must be developed as soon as possible, but not later than 90 days after the date of determination of eligibility, unless the State unit and the eligible individual agree to the extension of that deadline to a specific date by which the individualized plan for employment must be completed.

(f) Data for preparing the individualized plan for employment. (1) Preparation without comprehensive assessment. To the extent possible, the employment outcome and the nature and scope of rehabilitation services to be included in the individual's individualized plan for employment must be determined based on the data used for the assessment of eligibility and priority for services under §361.42.

**34 CFR §361.46 Content of the individualized plan for employment.**

(a) Mandatory components. Regardless of the approach in §361.45(c)(1) that an eligible individual selects for purposes of developing the individualized plan for employment, each individualized plan for employment must—

(1) Include a description of the specific employment outcome, as defined in §361.5(c)(15), that is chosen by the eligible individual and is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests, and informed choice consistent with the general goal of competitive integrated employment (except that in the case of an eligible individual who is a student or a youth with a disability, the description may be a description of the individual's projected post-school employment outcome);

(2) Include a description under §361.48 of—

(i) These specific rehabilitation services needed to achieve the employment outcome, including, as appropriate, the provision of assistive technology devices, assistive technology services, and personal assistance services, including training in the management of those services; and

(ii) In the case of a plan for an eligible individual that is a student or youth with a disability, the specific transition services and supports needed to achieve the individual's employment outcome or projected post-school employment outcome.

(3) Provide for services in the most integrated setting that is appropriate for the services involved and is consistent with the informed choice of the eligible individual;

(4) Include timelines for the achievement of the employment outcome and for the initiation of services;

(5) Include a description of the entity or entities chosen by the eligible individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative that will provide the vocational rehabilitation services and the methods used to procure those services;

(6) Include a description of the criteria that will be used to evaluate progress toward achievement of the employment outcome; and

(7) Include the terms and conditions of the individualized plan for employment, including, as appropriate, information describing—

(i) The responsibilities of the designated State unit;

(ii) The responsibilities of the eligible individual, including—

(A) The responsibilities the individual will assume in relation to achieving the employment outcome;

(B) If applicable, the extent of the individual's participation in paying for the cost of services; and

(C) The responsibility of the individual with regard to applying for and securing comparable services and benefits as described in §361.53; and

(iii) The responsibilities of other entities as the result of arrangements made pursuant to the comparable services or benefits requirements in §361.53.

(b) Supported employment requirements. An individualized plan for employment for an individual with a most significant disability for whom an employment outcome in a supported employment setting has been determined to be appropriate must—

(1) Specify the supported employment services to be provided by the designated State unit;

(2) Specify the expected extended services needed, which may include natural supports;

(3) Identify the source of extended services or, to the extent that it is not possible to identify the source of extended services at the time the individualized plan for employment is developed, include a description of the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that those sources will become available;

(4) Provide for periodic monitoring to ensure that the individual is making satisfactory progress toward meeting the weekly work requirement established in the individualized plan for employment by the time of transition to extended services;

(5) Provide for the coordination of services provided under an individualized plan for employment with services provided under other individualized plans established under other Federal or State programs;

(6) To the extent that job skills training is provided, identify that the training will be provided on site; and

(7) Include placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of individuals with the most significant disabilities.

(c) Post-employment services. The individualized plan for employment for each individual must contain, as determined to be necessary, statements concerning—

(1) The expected need for post-employment services prior to closing the record of services of an individual who has achieved an employment outcome;

(2) A description of the terms and conditions for the provision of any post-employment services; and

(3) If appropriate, a statement of how post-employment services will be provided or arranged through other entities as the result of arrangements made pursuant to the comparable services or benefits requirements in §361.53.

(d) Coordination of services for students with disabilities. The individualized plan for employment for a student with a disability must be coordinated with the individualized education program or 504 services, as applicable, for that individual in terms of the goals, objectives, and services identified in the education program.

## B-502: IPE Process

The IPE is developed with the customer or as appropriate, with the customer's representative, in his or her native language or mode of communication.

VR staff informs the customer of the available options for all or part of the IPE:

* with direct assistance from a VR counselor that is employed by TWC-VR,
* by the individual (without any assistance),
* with assistance of a qualified counselor that is not employed by TWC-VR, or
* with assistance, as appropriate, from a disability advocacy organization.

TWC-VR does not pay for assistance with IPE development.

The IPE must be approved by a VR counselor employed by TWC-VR and must include all required content. See VRSM B-504: Content of the IPE for more information.

Before asking the customer to sign the IPE, the VR counselor must explain:

* the terms and conditions for the delivery of services, including the start and end dates of the services;
* any financial commitment to the plan;
* the customer's right to appeal; and
* the availability of the Client Assistance Program.

Before signing the IPE, the VR counselor reviews the paper case file to ensure all required documentation has been obtained, such as:

* financial documents,
* signed release forms,
* employment authorization documents,
* identity documents, and
* insurance.

For documentation required prior to IPE that is kept in the paper case file, refer to VRSM B-204: Application.

A copy of the "Can We Talk" brochure and the information to make informed choices must be provided (or offered) at every step in the VR process: application, eligibility, IPE, denial of services, and closure. VR staff must document in RHW the date and method the information was provided and/or offered. Once signed, a copy of the IPE or IPE amendment must be provided to the customer.

### B-502-1: Mismatched Identification After the IPE in Reports and Other Correspondence

If a customer has not legally changed his or her name and wishes to be identified by another name, the following may be done to reflect his or her preferred name:

* For documentation that does not require a legal name, such as a case note, the following statement is an example of how VR counselors must initially document why the customer will be referred to by another name.

Example: "Joe Smith is in the process of transitioning from a man to a woman. The customer's legal name is Joe Smith; however, the customer identifies as Jane Smith. Therefore, all future case notes will reflect her preferred name of Jane Smith."

* For documentation that does require a legal name or forms signed by the customer, the following statement is an example of how VR counselors or providers must document why the customer will be referred to by another name.

Example: "Joe Smith is the customer's legal name; however, the customer identifies as Jane Smith. Therefore, the customer will be referred to as Jane Smith."

## B-503: Timelines for Developing the IPE

The IPE must be completed as soon as possible, but no later than 90 days after the customer has been determined eligible for VR services.

### B-503-1: Extension of Time for IPE

If the VR counselor and customer cannot complete the IPE within 90 days after the date that eligibility is determined, the VR counselor must:

1. discuss with the customer the reasons that the development of the IPE will require additional time to complete, and when the IPE is expected to be completed;
2. obtain agreement from the customer that the extension of time (EOT) for completing the IPE is necessary;
3. document in the comments section of the EOT for IPE page in ReHabWorks (RHW):
	* the reasons that an EOT is required, and
	* that the customer is in agreement with the EOT;
4. complete the EOT for IPE page in RHW.

If the VR counselor and the customer cannot reach an agreement of the contents of the IPE within 90 days, the VR counselor must:

1. provide the customer with a "Can We Talk" brochure;
2. document in RHW the date and method the brochure was provided;
3. document the status of the pending IPE; and
4. if needed, consult with the VR Supervisor for guidance on how to proceed with the case.

If the VR counselor cannot contact the customer to obtain agreement to complete the EOT for IPE by the 90th day, the VR counselor should consult with the VR Supervisor for guidance on how to proceed with the case. If it is determined that the case should be closed, refer to VRSM B-600: Closure and Post-Employment Services for information about closing the case.

Note: Consultations with the VR Supervisor listed in VRSM B-503-1: Extension of Time for IPE are for the VR counselor to receive guidance and do not require documentation.

#### IPE Requirements for Transition Students

All policies, timelines, and regulations related to IPE development, documentation, and amendments are also applicable when working with students with disabilities and youth with disabilities. For more information about developing an IPE for students with disabilities, refer to VRSM C-1300: Transition Services for Students and Youth with Disabilities.

## B-504: Content of the IPE

The IPE must contain:

* a description of the secondary education goal;
* a description of the post-secondary education goal;
* a description of the specific competitive integrated employment goal;
* a discussion of the use of comparable services and benefits;
* a list of any needed intermediate objectives or steps;
* the criteria for evaluating progress;
* a description of specific rehabilitation services needed to reach the IPE goal, including:
	+ start dates;
	+ end dates;
	+ specific providers and/or location of services;
	+ plan service category; and
	+ whether the service is arranged, provided, or purchased;
* a list of the specific responsibilities of the customer, TWC-VR, and other entities;
* an indication if it is a supported employment plan;
* an indication if it is a self-employment plan;
* an explanation of the customer's participation in the cost of services; and
* the frequency of contact that was agreed upon.

When appropriate, the IPE also includes:

* an explanation of the criteria used to determine customer participation in service costs; and
* additional information requested by the customer or considered vital by the VR counselor.

The service dates for the IPE must encompass the date that services are initiated to the expected date that services will be completed.

### B-504-1: Education Goal

The education goal that is documented on the IPE must be the agreed goal that the customer will work towards to achieve the identified employment goal.

The education goals to choose from in RHW include:

* Secondary education goal:
	+ Attain a secondary school diploma;
	+ Attain a secondary school equivalency;
	+ Attain certificate of attendance/completion; successfully completed IEP; and
	+ Not applicable no educational goal.
* Post-secondary education goal:
	+ Complete one or more years of postsecondary education;
	+ Attain a Non-degree postsecondary certification, license, or educational certificate;
	+ Attain an Associate Degree;
	+ Attain a Bachelor Degree;
	+ Attain a Master's Degree;
	+ Attain a PhD; and
	+ Not applicable no educational goal.

If the customer already has the degree or certification needed to achieve the employment goal, "not applicable" is listed on the IPE in this field in RHW.

### B-504-2: Employment Goal

The employment goal, as stated on the IPE, must be specific enough to be meaningful to the customer and agreed to by a VR counselor. Do not use general vocational objectives such as "to be determined" or "competitive integrated employment" or "supported employment" or "self-employment." The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) must be included in the IPE.

If necessary, state the initial employment goal, particularly for transition students, in terms of a type of career or industry, such as Office Clerk-General (43-9061.00). Revise the goals later as the customer focuses on specific employment goals. For more information about services for students, refer to VRSM C-1300: Transition Services for Students and Youth with Disabilities.

If the comprehensive assessment results in more than one appropriate choice, include the employment goal that most closely reflects the customer's interests and expectations for salary and benefits at the time that the IPE is developed. As the case develops, amend the IPE if a different employment goal is more appropriate.

If a customer is interested in an employment goal that requires a license, criminal history check, or drug screening test, assess the ability of the customer to meet those requirements before the IPE is completed, and again when the customer is ready for employment. Refer to VRSM B-404-3: Other Factors That May Impact the Choice of an Employment Goal.

Uncompensated employment goals (such as homemaker or unpaid family worker) do not meet the definition of competitive integrated employment or supported employment and cannot be used as an employment goal for the customer's IPE.

The VR counselor cannot agree to an employment goal on the customer's IPE if the customer will not be able to meet the employment requirements after the provision of VR services.

#### Employment Goal Resources

Information about in-demand occupations and other workforce data is available from TWS regarding [Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI).](http://www.lmci.state.tx.us/)

Detailed descriptions of occupations, information about industry categories, and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) is available from [O\*NET](https://www.onetonline.org/).

### B-504-3: Intermediate Objectives

Intermediate objectives are the steps in the vocational rehabilitation process that are necessary for the customer to reach a competitive integrated employment outcome; they must have a clear cause and effect relationship with the employment goal that is identified on the IPE.

The VR services agreed upon will lead to completion of the intermediate objectives that will result in achieving the employment goal.

In creating intermediate objectives:

* address factors that affect the customer's ability to participate in identified services; and
* include strategies to develop the skills, abilities, or other key attributes needed for the customer to progress in rehabilitation planning.

### B-504-4: Progress Review Criteria

Enter objective criteria by which progress toward the achievement of the employment outcome will be measured. In most cases, this is the progress toward completing intermediate objectives. Documentation of progress toward the employment outcome is captured in RHW case notes and may also include copies of:

* reports from in-house VR providers (technology, VR teachers, Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center (CCRC), Orientation and Mobility or O&M);
* provider reports;
* medical reports;
* academic reports;
* low vision reports;
* facility reports; and
* customer's reports or perceptions.

### B-504-5: Planned Services

The IPE must include all substantial goods and services and any anticipated ancillary or supportive goods and services that are necessary for the customer to reach the identified employment goal. There must be a clear association between the identified good or service, the customer's disability, and the employment goal.

The IPE should not reflect specific rates but should refer to them as "will pay amounts per policy."

The VR counselor must review carefully the published policies and procedures for each good or service before including it on the customer's IPE.

If consultations or approvals are required for a specific good or service, these must be completed and documented by the consultant or approver in a RHW case note before the good or services is included in the customer's IPE. Refer to VRSM E-200: Summary Table of Approvals, Consultations, and Notifications.

#### Types of Services

Enter the specific services the customer will receive to help the customer find employment.

The following vocational rehabilitation services are available to assist the individual with a disability in preparing for, securing, retaining, advancing in or regaining an employment outcome that is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice:

* Assessment for determining eligibility and priority for services by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;
* Assessment for determining vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology.
* Vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice;
* Referral and other services necessary to assist applicants and eligible individuals to secure needed services from other agencies and to advise those individuals about client assistance programs;
* Physical and mental restoration services;
* Vocational and other training services, including personal and vocational adjustment training, advanced training in, but not limited to, a field of science, technology, engineering, mathematics (including computer science), medicine, law, or business);
* Textbooks, tools, and other training materials;
* Maintenance;
* Transportation in connection with the provision of a VR service;
* Services to family members of VR customers if necessary to enable the applicant or eligible individual to achieve an employment outcome;
* Interpreter services;
* Reader services, rehabilitation teaching services, and orientation and mobility services for individuals who are blind;
* Job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services;
* Supported employment services;
* Personal assistance services;
* Post-employment services;
* Occupational licenses, tools, equipment, initial stocks, and supplies;
* Rehabilitation and assistive technology services, including vehicle modification, telecommunications, sensory, and other technological aids and devices;
* Transition services for students and youth with disabilities or pre-employment transition services for students;
* Technical assistance and other consultation services to conduct market analyses, develop business plans, and otherwise provide resources, to the extent those resources are authorized to be provided through the statewide workforce development system, to eligible individuals who are pursuing self-employment or telecommuting or establishing a small business operation as an employment outcome;
* Customized employment; and
* Other goods and services determined necessary for the individual with a disability to achieve a competitive integrated employment outcome.

Authority: Sections 7(37), 12(c), 103(a), and 113 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; 29 U.S.C. 705(37), 709(c), 723(a), and 733.

#### Counseling and Guidance

Counseling and guidance must be included on every IPE as a planned service. For more information, refer to VRSM C-100: Counseling and Guidance.

#### Substantial Goods and Services

A good or service is substantial when it helps the customer to achieve an employment outcome, regardless of the amount of time, effort, or funds expended, by

* correcting or significantly improving the disability;
* removing or significantly reducing the vocational impediment(s);
* providing the customer with informed choices of a
	+ competitive integrated employment goal, and
	+ plan to accomplish the goal;
* training the customer in the necessary work skills despite the disability and/or vocational impediment(s); and/or
* modifying the working conditions to be compatible with the disability and/or vocational impediment(s).

All substantial goods and services must be included on the customer's IPE. Any change to or addition of a substantial good or service must be documented in an IPE amendment. For more information on IPE amendments, refer to VRSM B-505-2: IPE Amendment.

#### Ancillary Goods and Services

Ancillary goods or services are those things that are an integral part of a substantial service. For example, a surgery that is performed by a specific physician at a specific facility is likely to require ancillary services such as anesthesia, pathology, radiology, and consultations.

Anticipated ancillary services, such as those that are included on the Form VR3110 Surgery and Treatment Recommendation or the Form VR3109 Eye Surgery and Treatment Recommendations, forms found in the forms catalogue must be included on the customer's IPE. If there is a change to the ancillary services after the IPE has been completed, but the substantial services, such as the physician and facility, remain the same, then a service justification case note can be used to document this change; an IPE amendment is not required.

For more information refer to VRSM D-202-1: Documentation Requirements and VRSM E-300: Case Notes Requirements.

If, during the provision of planned services, unanticipated ancillary services are necessary to complete the service, refer to VRSM D-204-3: After-the-Fact Ancillary Service Authorizations for required processes and procedures.

#### Supportive Goods and Services

Supportive goods and services are those that are necessary for a customer to participate in

* assessments to determine eligibility for VR services and identify VR needs; or
* substantial VR services that are included in the IPE or the current IPE amendment.

If a supportive good or service is anticipated at the time the IPE is completed, it should be included on the customer's IPE.  However, if there is a change to a planned supportive service or if the need for a supportive service is identified after the IPE has been completed, then an IPE amendment is not required; a service justification case note can be used to document this change. The service justification case note must clearly document how the good or service supports a substantial service that is included on the customer's IPE.

Examples of supportive goods or services may include interpreter services, unplanned supplies, and tutors. For more information on supportive goods and services, refer to VRSM C-1400: Supportive Goods and Services.

#### Providers

The IPE must include a description of the entity or entities chosen by the customer that will provide VR services. To meet this requirement, the IPE must include the name of the provider or entity that will provide the service listed on the IPE. The only exception to this requirement is when there is required bidding process and the vendor is unknown, in that case list "State Bid Process/Purchasing."

Before including a provider on the customer's IPE, the VR counselor informs the customer about alternative providers for each service. If requested, the VR counselor gives the customer a list of available providers for specific VR services. The list includes only those providers who are associated with the RHW specification level for the geographic area where the customer will be receiving services at the time of the request.

If the customer has a service provider that the customer wishes to use, it is VR staff responsibility to determine whether that provider meets the standards and will accept TWC-VR fee schedules. See the VR Standards for Providers Manual.

If the preferred provider is not set up in ReHabWorks, refer to VRSM D-211: Setting Up and Paying Providers for information about setting up providers. The provider must be set up in RHW before they can be included on the customer's IPE.

#### Services Based on Level of Significance

If the customer's case is designated as significant or most significant:

* include in the IPE any needed interventions for each functional capacity area that is identified as seriously limited; and
* verify that VR will be providing at least one substantial service over an extended period of time in addition to counseling and guidance, and any assessment services necessary to develop the IPE.

For more information about level of significance, see VRSM B-309: Establishing the Level of Significance.

#### Dates of Service

The dates of service on the IPE should clearly reflect the total time that it will take the customer to complete all IPE services, reach the identified employment goal, and meet the requirements for successful case closure.

The start date can be no earlier than the date that the IPE is signed.

For each service:

* enter the date that the service is expected to begin as the start date; and
* enter the date that each service is expected to end as the end date.

If it becomes apparent that the start or end dates for a specific service falls outside the parameters of the dates identified on the IPE, and if the service:

* is an ancillary service or a service that supports a substantial service that is on the IPE - this change can be documented in a service justification case note;
* is a substantial service, this change must be documented in an IPE amendment.

If services dates expire for a substantial service included in the IPE, an amendment must be completed.

#### Payment Method

The IPE includes the payment method for each service. The payment method depends on whether there is a cost for a good or service and include arranged, provided, and purchased. For specific descriptions of each type of payment method, refer to the VR Glossary and the ReHabWorks Users Guide, E-200: Case Service Record.

#### Service Records

A service record and a service authorization must be created in RHW for each purchased service that is included on the customer's IPE. Refer to VRSM D-204: The Purchasing Process for additional information about authorizing the purchase of a good or service with a service authorization.

Service records must also be completed for in-house services that are provided by:

* a rehabilitation teacher;
* CCRC;
* the Vocational Diagnostic Unit (VDU);
* Employment Assistance Services (EAS); and
* the Assistive Technology Unit (ATU).

Do not create service records for:

* counseling and guidance; or
* completing a certificate of blindness for a tuition exemption.

For additional information, refer to the ReHabWorks Users Guide, E-200: Case Service Record.

### B-504-6: Comparable Benefits

Information about available comparable benefits and services must be included on the customer's IPE. This includes any comparable services and benefits that the customer has or has agreed to seek. Clearly describe the customer's responsibility to apply for and maintain eligibility for comparable benefits, such as Pell grants. For more information, refer to VRSM D-203-3: Use of Comparable Benefits.

### B-504-7: Customer Participation in Cost of Services

Information about the customer's participation in the cost of services must be included on the customer's IPE. For more information, refer to VRSM D-203-4: Customer Participation in the Cost of Services.

### B-504-8: Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the rehabilitation team must be worded clearly in objective, measurable statements on the customer's IPE.

An example that is not a clear, objective, and measurable statement is:

"Apply for financial aid."

An example of a clear, objective, and measurable statement is:

"Apply for the Pell grant each semester."

#### VR Responsibilities

VR staff are responsible for ensuring compliance with published policies and procedures throughout the VR process. For more information about roles and responsibilities of VR staff throughout the VR process, see VRSM B-100: Vocational Rehabilitation Process, Roles, and Responsibilities.

#### Customer Responsibilities

In addition to specific responsibilities identified on the customer's IPE, all customers must:

* inform VR of any changes to his or her address or phone number, income, programs paying for services, or disability; and
* provide documents to verify authorization to work in the U.S.

Tools, equipment, or supplies provided or purchased to support VR goals must be

* used only for the agreed-upon purpose,
* returned to VR when no longer used for intended purpose, and
* repaired and or maintained at customer's expense.

For more information about role and responsibilities of the customer throughout the VR process, see VRSM B-101-1: Customer.

#### Purchasing Decisions

The VR counselor must explain TWC-VR informed choice, best value purchasing, required use of available comparable benefits, and customer participation in the cost of services to the customer and the impact they may have on selection of goods and services necessary to achieve the employment goal. See VRSM D-203: Purchasing Decisions for more information.

### B-504-9: Frequency of Contact for an IPE or IPE Amendment

Contact with a VR customer is defined as interaction with the customer or representative through direct face-to-face communication, phone calls, written correspondence, or electronic communications, such as email. All communications with customers must be confidential and secure. For instructions on encrypting electronic communications, refer to the VR Program Operations Intranet page under VR Covid-19 Updates and Resources.

Note: VR staff must comply with all policies and procedures in the TWC Privacy Manual (PDF) found on the TWC intranet page under miscellaneous manuals. Text messages and emails sent from the Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant (SARA) are considered secure; however, VR staff must not communicate sensitive information such as personal identifying information (PII) with VR customers through non-secure means. Text messaging, even from an agency device, is not a secure means of communication.

The frequency that the VR office maintains contact with a VR customer, also referred to as "FOC", varies based on the customer's individual circumstances and needs. For example, one customer who is attending college may only need periodic contacts throughout the semester or at the beginning and end of each semester. A customer that is actively engaged in more intensive services, such as Project Search or Supported Employment, may require monthly contacts.

FOC can change as needed throughout the life of the case. If FOC changes from a lower number of days to a higher (less frequent) number of days, an IPE amendment is required. If FOC changes from a higher number of days to a lower (more frequent) number of days, an IPE amendment is not required.

For example, if the FOC on the IPE is identified as 60 days, but the customer needs weekly FOC for a period of time, then FOC can be provided weekly and the IPE does not need to be changed since this is within the minimum threshold of the timeframe selected on the IPE.

The minimum FOC with the customer should be clearly stated on the customer's IPE.

Substantive customer contact may be made by a VR counselor, Rehabilitation Assistant, or other VR staff, and occurs as often as necessary. Each of these contacts will count towards meeting the required FOC that is identified on the IPE.

When VR staff initiate contact with the customer or representative with no response, it is documented as an attempted contact. When the customer is not able to be contacted prior to closing the case, refer to VRSM B-605: Customer Notification. For information on documentation, refer to VRSM E-300: Case Notes Requirements.

### B-504-10: Frequency of Counseling and Guidance

For information on counseling and guidance refer to VRSM C-102-1: Frequency of Counseling and Guidance.

### B-504-11: Signatures

A valid IPE must be signed by the VR customer or, as appropriate, the customer's representative, and approved and signed by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor employed by TWC VR. For more information, refer to VRSM A-210: PIN and Signature Procedures.

Under no circumstances does the IPE or IPE amendment take effect or allow for payment of any service until it is agreed to and signed by the customer or the customer's representative and the VR counselor.

Note: In addition to being included on the customer's IPE, purchased services must also be authorized in advance with a service authorization that is generated by RHW. For more information about required purchasing processes and procedures, refer to VRSM D-200: Purchasing Goods and Services.

#### Customer or Representative Signatures

The VR counselor reviews with the customer or the customer's representative, his or her rights and responsibilities, as stated on the IPE, and provides him or her with a copy of the "Can We Talk" brochure before asking them to sign the IPE. The VR counselor must document in RHW the date and method the brochure was provided. The customer or required, the customer's representative, must sign and date an IPE after the IPE has been developed and agreed upon by both the customer and the VR counselor.

When the IPE is not available in RHW, print the Form VR5163, Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), and:

* have the customer sign it;
* place the signed VR5163 in the case folder;
* document in the case note that the VR5163 was signed; and
* enter the IPE into RHW and enter a pseudo PIN.

For more information about PINs, see the ReHabWorks User Guide, Chapter 8: PINs.

#### VR Counselor Signature

The VR counselor reviews and approves the IPE after considering:

* results of the comprehensive assessment;
* the customer's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests, and informed choice; and
* applicable TWC-VR procedures.

If the VR counselor does not agree with content that the customer is requesting to be included in the IPE, the VR counselor should not sign the IPE, but discuss specific points and problem areas with the customer.

If the customer and the VR counselor cannot come to an agreement on the content of the proposed IPE after discussing their concerns, the VR counselor informs the customer of his or her rights as outlined in the "Can We Talk" brochure. The VR counselor documents in RHW the date and method the brochure was provided. The VR counselor also documents the status of the pending IPE, and if needed consults with the VR Supervisor for guidance on how to proceed with the case. This consult is for guidance and does not require documentation. If needed, an EOT for completing the IPE may be necessary. For more information, refer to VRSM B-503-1: Extension of Time for IPE.

### B-504-12: IPE Documentation Requirements

The content that is included in the customer's IPE must be supported by the information that is documented in the comprehensive assessment case note. In addition to the comprehensive assessment case note, when completing the IPE with the customer, Counseling and Guidance is provided by the VR counselor and must be documented in a C&G case note. This case note must be entered in RHW within 7 calendar days of completing the IPE. Refer to VRSM E-300: Case Notes Requirements (Word) for additional information.

## B-505: Joint Annual Review and IPE Amendments

The IPE is reviewed at least annually by the VR counselor and the customer or, as appropriate, the customer's representative to assess the customer's progress in achieving the identified employment goal. The review of the IPE can be completed as a formal joint annual review (JAR) or when the IPE is amended.

Completing either a joint annual review or an IPE amendment resets the clock for the next annual review. The new date for completing the next JAR is one year from the date of the most recent JAR or IPE amendment.

### B-505-1: Joint Annual Review

When completing a JAR, the VR counselor meets with the customer and, as appropriate, the customer's representative to

* review the details in the current IPE or IPE amendment;
* determine if there is a need to complete an IPE amendment;
* review and update all information captured in RHW under the following menus:
	+ Initial Contact,
	+ Application,
	+ Education History, and
	+ Plan;
* review and update release forms; and
* document the joint annual review (JAR) in a case note.

#### JAR Documentation

The JAR case note must include a specific review of all required elements of the IPE, including a review of the progress made toward reaching the employment goal. This includes a review of the

* Employment goal
* Educational goal
* Intermediate objectives
* Progress (including training progress, if applicable)
* Planned services and goods (including providers and service dates)
* Comparable benefits
* Customer participation in cost of services
* Roles and Responsibilities

If the JAR does not result in substantive changes in the employment goal, the VR services to be provided, or the providers of the VR services, then an amendment is not required. Include a statement in the JAR case note to confirm that both customer and VR counselor agree that no changes are needed.

If the JAR results in substantive changes in the employment goal, the VR services to be provided, or the providers of the VR services, then an IPE amendment is required.  The results of the JAR can be documented in the IPE amendment case note.

If the JAR results in a need for new diagnostics to determine whether new services are needed, an IPE amendment is not necessary.  A service justification case note must be written in RHW explaining the necessity for the new diagnostics.  Once the results have been received and reviewed by the VR counselor and customer, if new services are required and agreed upon, an IPE amendment will be necessary to cover those services.

Except for cases in the employment phase in RHW, if the JAR results in a need for only new ancillary or supportive services to support services that already exist on the IPE or current IPE amendment, an IPE amendment is not required; instead, a service justification case note can be used to document the need for and authorization for these services. The start and end dates for the ancillary or supportive service must not go past the end date for the associated service on the IPE. Cases that are in the employment phase in RHW must have an amended IPE for any service that is not in the current IPE or IPE amendment. Refer to VRSM B-506: Post-Employment Services.

Refer to VRSM E-300: Case Notes Requirements for additional information.

### B-505-2: IPE Amendment

The IPE is amended, as necessary, by the customer or, as appropriate, the customer's representative, in collaboration with the VR counselor; if there are substantive changes in the employment goal, the VR services to be provided, or the providers of the VR services. A substantial change to the employment goal occurs when there is a change to the Standard Occupation Classification job family identified in the first two digits of the SOC code.

Once a customer has reached an employment phase in RHW, any service provided must be listed on the IPE or the IPE amendment. Refer to VRSM B-506: Post-Employment Services.

The amendment must be completed before the dates of services on the IPE or current IPE amendment have expired.

When a service is carried over to a new IPE amendment, the start and end dates will remain as they were on the previous IPE or IPE amendment; if the service is to resume after the gap between the expiration date/end date of the service, the next line item for the service must include the new start date, which is the date of the current IPE amendment or a later date. This line item will also include the anticipated end date of the service.

When completing an IPE amendment, review and update what is reviewed as part of the joint annual review (see VRSM B-505-1: Joint Annual Review).

#### Content of the IPE Amendment

The IPE amendment is a standalone document that captures the goals and services that the customer will need to continue to progress towards a competitive integrated employment goal. All policies and procedures for completing the original IPE apply to the completion of the IPE amendment. Refer to VRSM B-503: Content of the IPE for more information.

All services that remain in effect at the time that the IPE is amended must be included on the IPE amendment. The start date of services on the IPE amendment should reflect the date that the services first started if they were included in the original IPE or a previous IPE amendment. New services that are added to the IPE amendment cannot have a start date prior to the date of the current IPE amendment.

The IPE amendment must be signed by both the VR counselor and the customer or their representative in RHW or on a printed version of the Form VR5159, Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) Amendment before services can continue.

If RHW is not available, the VR counselor may use Form VR5159, Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) Amendment. Enter the information from the VR5159 into RHW as soon as possible and maintain the signed paper copy of the VR5159 in the customer's case folder. When the IPE amendment is completed in RHW, print and provide a copy of the document to the customer.

#### IPE Amendment Documentation

When completing an IPE amendment, review and update what is reviewed as part of the joint annual review (see VRSM B-505-1: Joint Annual Review). In addition to this information, document, in ReHabWorks, the justification for any changes to the goals, services, providers, or other content that will be included in the IPE amendment. Document justification for any additional services that are needed to achieve the employment goal (including documentation of best value for purchased goods and services).

Refer to VRSM E-300: Case Notes Requirements for additional information.

### B-505-3: Amending the IPE for Post-Employment Services

Refer to VRSM B-506-1: Post-Employment IPE Amendment for information about completing an IPE amendment for post-employment services.

## B-506: Post-Employment Services

As part of the VR process, every customer must be informed of his or her right to contact the VR counselor if any problem arises that jeopardizes his or her job.

Post-employment services are offered before the VR case is closed. Post-employment services are services to assist the customer in maintaining, regaining, or advancing in employment after a customer’s case is in employment phase. The goal of post-employment services is to help the customer, in the career of his or her choice, reach a level of:

* self-sufficiency;
* job retention; and
* job stability.

A customer may be considered for post-employment services if the customer:

* needs help maintaining employment;
* continues to have a disability that is not a new disability;
* has an employment-related problem requiring VR services;
* needs services that are not complex, comprehensive(substantial); and
* the VR case is in employment phase.

If complex, comprehensive (substantial) services are needed or if there is a new disability to be addressed, the case will need to be moved back to active services phase in RHW and an IPE amendment is required.

A VR case reaches employment services phase in RHW when:

* services on the IPE and/or IPE amendment are completed;
* no complex, comprehensive (substantial) services are required; and
* the customer’s employment is consistent with the IPE goal.

Once a case is closed, if complex, comprehensive (substantial) VR services are needed, a new case must be opened. A “fast track” option is available to complete the ReHabWorks application if the new case is opened within one year from when the previous case was closed, and the customer’s disability has not changed. Refer to VRSM B-204-1: Application Process for more information. If the case is closed within the current program year quarter the case can be phase adjusted. Refer to VRSM B-206-2: Opening a New Case or Adjusting the Phase of a Previously Closed Case.

### B-506-1: Post-Employment IPE Amendment

When post-employment services are necessary, the VR counselor and customer:

1. completes an IPE amendment; and
2. provides a copy of the plan to the customer and representative, if applicable.

If any additional services are needed, a new IPE amendment is required.

### B-506-2: Closing a Case from Post-Employment

The decision to end post-employment services should be:

* made in consultation with the customer; and
* based on the VR counselor's judgement.

When closing a case from post-employment services, the VR counselor ensures that the need for post-employment services has been addressed.

The VR counselor confirms that the customer:

* is maintaining employment without post-employment services;
* does not need additional VR services at this time;
* has favorable prospects for job security;
* is satisfied with the job;
* has accepted the employee benefits and opportunities for job development and advancement;
* has a job that is suited to his or her capabilities; and
* has a chance to advance through self-initiative within the area and labor market.

To close a case from Post-Employment Services, the VR counselor proceeds to close the case successfully or unsuccessfully. Refer to VRSM B-600: Closure.