

TEXAS WORKFORCE INVESTMENT
COUNCIL

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES: A TEXAS PRIMER

SEPTEMBER 2025



The Mission of the Texas Workforce Investment Council

Assisting the Governor and the legislature with strategic planning for and evaluation of the Texas workforce system to promote the development of a well-educated, highly skilled workforce for Texas.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services: A Texas Primer

Texas Workforce Investment Council

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Introduction

In 2024, the Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council) published the *People with Disabilities: A Texas Profile* report, which provided an in-depth understanding of the disabled population within the state. The comprehensive report revealed Texas' standing as the second most populous state of individuals with disabilities in the U.S. The report also provided detailed demographic characteristics to help workforce system partners better serve this population, who contribute essential skills and abilities to the Texas workforce.

In 2018, the Council published the *Vocational Rehabilitation Services: A Texas Primer* report, which provided a brief history of vocational rehabilitation (VR) in Texas, the Vocational Rehabilitation Division of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), and the services provided. The report was developed to familiarize Council members and workforce system partners with the VR program and its services.

This report intends to complement the *People with Disabilities: A Texas Profile* report and update the *Vocational Rehabilitation Services: A Texas Primer* report by highlighting services and programs developed to assist the disabled population of Texas. The report will also highlight the significant growth in customers, the continued integration between VR and other workforce services, and how those services are provided.

Relevant Legislation

Texas Government Code (TGC), Section 2308.101, charges the Council with promoting the development of a well-educated, highly skilled workforce in the state. The Council is additionally charged with advocating for the development of an integrated workforce development system to provide quality services for addressing the needs of businesses and workers in the state. *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024–2031* aims to further engage system partners in a workforce system that drives economic prosperity by growing and sustaining a competitive workforce. VR is explicitly listed in the *TWC FY 2024 – FY 2031 Partner Agency Plan* section of the system strategic plan, in relation to the expansion of work-based learning (WBL) and apprenticeship opportunities.

Vocational Rehabilitation Legislation

Today's VR system was originally founded by the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, which provided funding and created the Federal Board for Vocational Education. The Smith-Fess Act, passed in 1919, expanded the Soldier's Rehabilitation Act to include civilians with disabilities. The Social Security Act of 1935 further improved VR and, by 1954, increases in funding paved the way for future VR solutions through the expansion of services.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ensured services for individuals with severe disabilities and enforced the civil rights of all disabled individuals. In 1998, the Workforce Investment Act and amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 were signed into law. These acts tied VR to employment outcomes, supported informed customer choices, and supported the expectation of high-quality employment. In 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) further expanded VR programs and transitional services for disabled students and youth.

United States Code (U.S.C.), Title 29, Chapter 16, provides the federal purpose and provisions for VR and other rehabilitative services. The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 34, Part 361, outlines federal regulations for state VR services programs. It requires that the Combined State Plan (CSP) must either designate a state agency to be primarily focused on VR or assure the existence of a dedicated VR bureau, division, or unit within a state agency whose primary responsibility is VR. In Texas, the [WIOA Combined State Plan for Program Years 2024-2027](#) designates TWC as the state agency responsible for the administration of all core and partner VR programs through the creation of a dedicated division.

The Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT) is also required by federal law to assess and evaluate VR programs and services in the state, which includes an assessment of customer satisfaction and employment outcomes. Federal law also requires RCT to consult with the Council (the state's workforce development board). A member representative of the Council serves as liaison between the Council and RCT, providing quarterly updates to each partner. Additionally, TGC, Chapter 2308.052 maintains the Executive Director of TWC as an ex officio member of the Council.

In 2016, Texas Senate Bill (SB) 208 initiated the transfer of Texas' division for individuals with visual impairments and the division for individuals with other disabilities from the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) to TWC. In 2017, both divisions were combined to form the VR Division.

State regulations regarding VR and its services are defined by Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 40, Chapter 856. Specifically, TAC Rule §856.49 defines the objective of VR as assisting all individuals who may benefit from VR services in obtaining competitive integrated employment (CIE) that aligns with the "...individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice". The [Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual](#) (VRSM) identifies CIE as: part-time or full-time employment that pays no less than either the legal minimum wage or what is common among individuals without disabilities; takes place in a common workplace/community; and presents opportunities for advancement as they are presented to individuals without disabilities.

Scope and Exclusions

This profile aims to provide an understanding of TWC's VR Division by detailing its structure, partnerships, services, funding, growth, and inner workings along with insight on providers and

their work within the field. With TWC as its statutorily required administrator, VR includes the division's state and federal partners, and RCT. Service providers will also be discussed in relation to VR.

As previously stated, the Council's 2024 demographic report, *People with Disabilities: A Texas Profile*, provides a detailed analysis of the disabled population within the state, whereas this report includes only references to population demographics, where relevant, to support understanding of the division and provision of services. Furthermore, while the report explores the intricacies of the VR processes—from intake to case closure—it should be noted that due to the extensive offering of services, this profile mainly focuses on the categories of services. Additionally, VR services are generally customized to the needs of the customer while serving its primary intent. Service eligibility requirements will also be discussed within the more generalized service categories; however, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VR counselors) ultimately determine the applicability of a service.

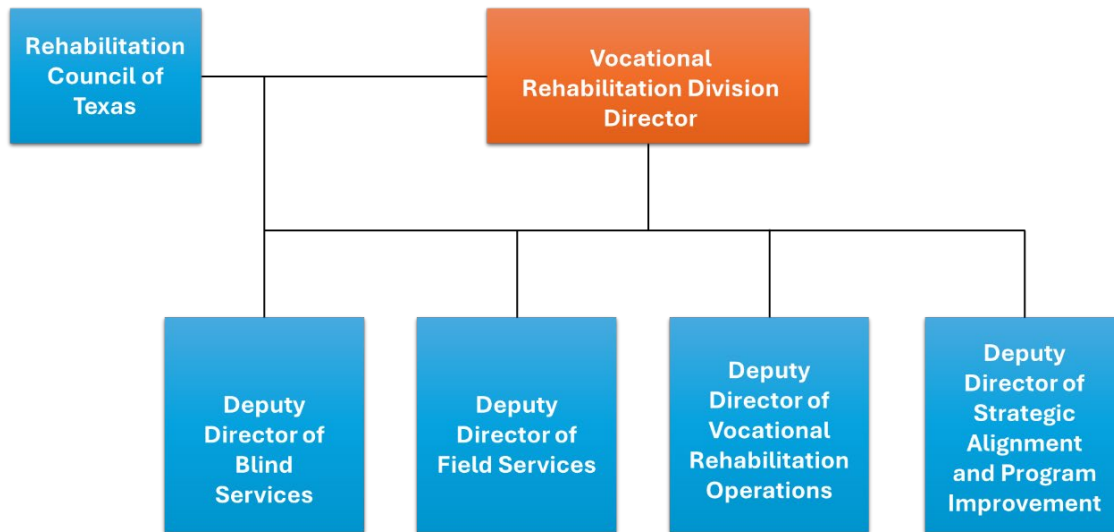
The profile will conclude with ongoing improvements aimed at better serving Texas' VR customers. These efforts include innovations within the VR Division, enhancements to VR services, and advancements among VR service providers.

Methodology

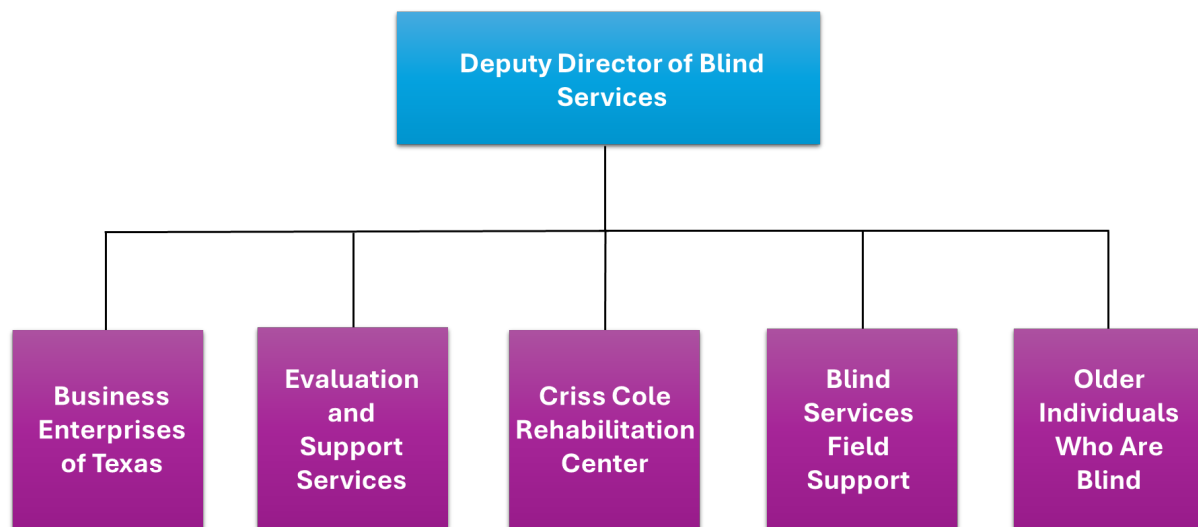
The research for this profile required consistent collaboration between the Council and VR. Consequently, this profile includes first-hand information from the VR Division. All data featured in this profile has been provided directly by VR, along with the descriptions of services, relationships, and processes as described in the VRSM, the [Vocational Rehabilitation Standards for Providers Manual](#) (VR-SFP), the 2023 and 2024 RCT annual reports, the CSP, and the [VR Division](#) website.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Division

The Vocational Rehabilitation Division is staffed by over 1,700 full-time employees and overseen by the Division Director who is responsible for the division's overall performance and strategic direction. The division also benefits from the guidance of four Deputy Directors, each overseeing a critical functional area: Blind Services, Field Services, VR Operations, and Strategic Alignment and Program Improvement.



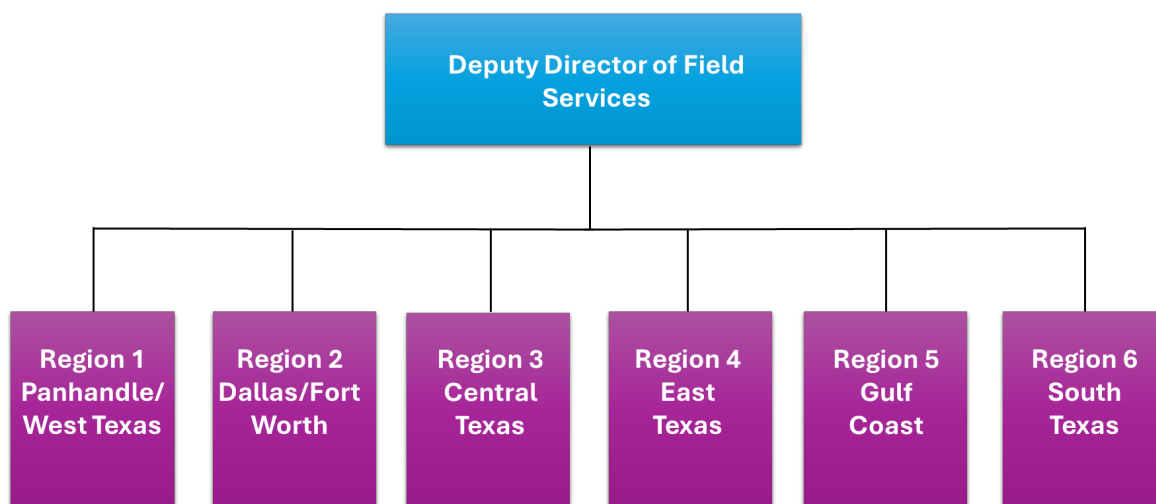
Office of Blind Services (OBS) empowers individuals who are blind or visually impaired through a comprehensive array of services. This includes field support, technology evaluation and support services, Older Individuals Who Are Blind, the Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center, and the Business Enterprises of Texas program. Individualized assistance in areas such as assistive technology evaluation and training, accessibility support, and independent living skills development also work with businesses to create an accessible workplace.



Field Services directly assists individuals with disabilities through career counseling, job placement support, and workforce readiness training. TWC administers VR services through six regional offices and over 160 local VR office locations throughout the state. The regional offices cultivate partnerships with employers to create inclusive hiring opportunities and collaborate with

community organizations and educational institutions to broaden career pathways aligned with occupational demand in the following regions of the state:

- Region 1—Panhandle/West Texas;
- Region 2—Dallas Fort Worth/Texoma;
- Region 3—Central Texas;
- Region 4—East Texas;
- Region 5—Gulf Coast; and
- Region 6—South Texas.



VR Operations and Program Support manages the operational infrastructure of VR services. This includes overseeing provider contracts, budgets, and personnel support, maintaining and improving case management and data systems, performance reporting, and offering technical assistance to frontline staff.

Strategic Alignment and Program Improvement is responsible for crafting and implementing policies that support compliance with state and federal regulations; leading strategic initiatives to enhance VR services; performing program evaluations and data analysis to improve service outcomes; and fostering continuous improvement and innovation in service delivery.

Vocational Rehabilitation Funding

The VR program is authorized through WIOA Title IV and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The U.S. Department of Education provides the funding for the VR program through the Rehabilitation Services Administration division. TWC administers the state program.

Funds are dispersed to states based on a statutory formula which considers population and per capita income and are administered under the approved VR services portion of the CSP in accordance with WIOA. States are required to match a portion of the federal funding for the VR

program to meet the cost sharing requirements through the expenditures of non-federal funds (not to exceed 21.3 percent of total funding).

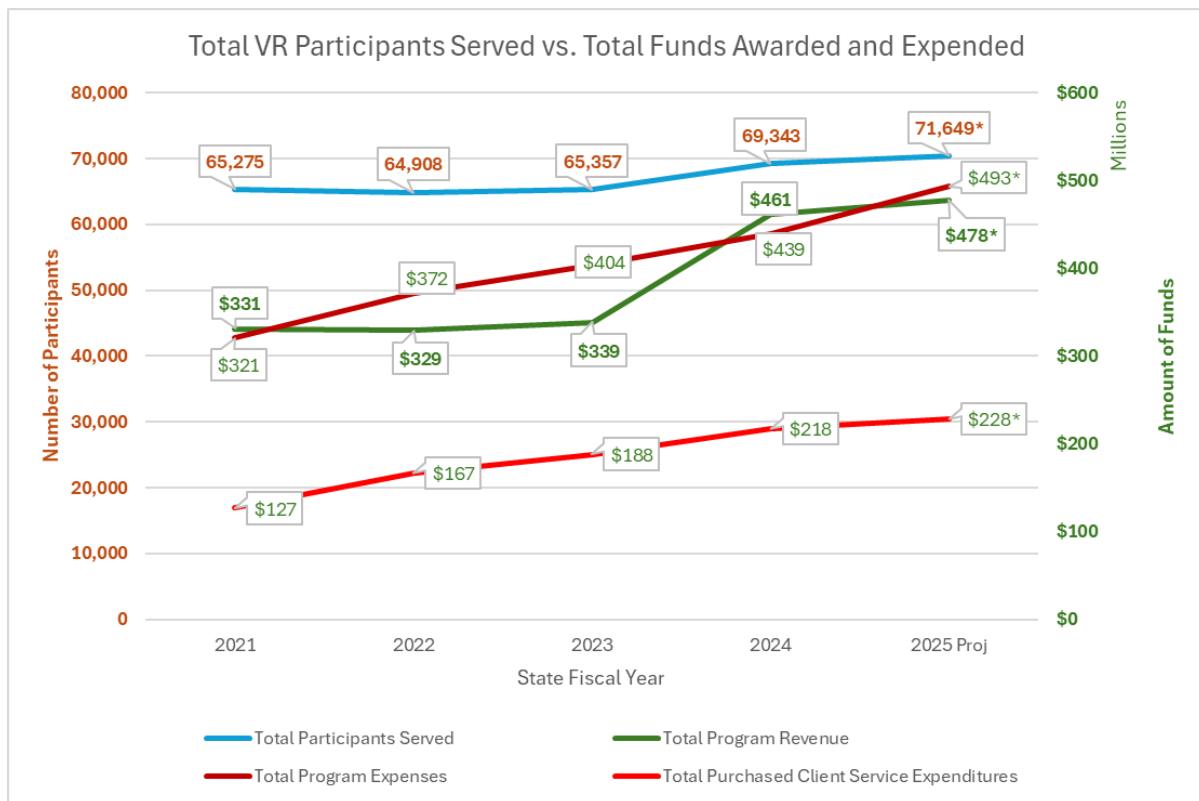
States are required to reserve and expend 15 percent of the federal portion of the state allotment received for the provision of pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities who are in school and aged 14 to 22. Pre-ETS include job exploration counseling, WBL experiences, counseling for postsecondary educational programs, workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and instruction in self-advocacy.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) administers the VR reimbursement program. Under the program, SSA reimburses VR agencies the cost of certain administrative and tracking costs and services provided to SSA recipients if services resulted in employment. The VR program is eligible to receive cost reimbursement from SSA after providing services if the customer:

- was a recipient of social security disability insurance or social security insurance at the time VR services were received; and
- was working for a continuous nine months out of a 12-month period either during or after VR services were received.

Expenditure and Budget

The VR program is experiencing an increase in demand for services resulting in a significant escalation in program costs. Beginning in SFY 2021 and peaking in SFY 2024, this surge has been primarily driven by an increase in client services, including increased participation from students with disabilities, growth in post-secondary education and training (PSET), and expanded WBL opportunities. The chart below illustrates the increase in client services costs, program expenses, program revenue, and participants between SFY 2021 and SFY 2025 (projected).



Sources: ReHabWorks Data Management System, and TW-VR Finance.

*Projections for FY 2025

In the 89th Texas Legislative Session, TWC received supplemental funds for SFY 2025, and additional funds for the SFY 2026–2027 biennium. The VR Division needed the state general revenue as an additional match to draw-down all available federal funding. As continued increases in VR service participants are projected, evaluations of the program's financial sustainability and efficient resource allocation are critical and ongoing. The section below identifies additional strategies and controls used to manage the financial impact of growing demand.

Alternative Funding (Comparable Benefits)

For many program services offered by the VR Division, efforts are made to secure alternate funding from all potential resources before using VR funding. Alternative funding programs can include but are not limited to:

- Medicaid;
- Medicare;
- private health insurance;
- workers' compensation;
- veterans' benefits;
- educational grants;
- scholarships;

- arranged services (services provided and funded by external agencies), e.g., tutoring, diabetes education, indigent healthcare; and
- any other available community, state, or federal benefit program.

The VR Division does not pursue alternate funding for in-house services, such as assessments (used to determine eligibility), employment services, counseling and guidance, information and referral to other programs, or rehabilitation technology services. The division also will refrain from significantly delaying or interrupting services to pursue alternate funding.

Case Costs

As overall costs increase, the VR Division continues to provide staff with decision making guidance, including necessary training and tools. The agency monitors costs and length of cases as a method to evaluate the effectiveness of staff understanding and execution of the services and customer care practices.

The average total cost of a case for participants decreased from \$8,153 in SFY 2023 to \$7,122 in SFY 2024. Average cost of a case varied by primary disability impairment, from \$5,440 for auditory/communicative disability cases to \$10,058 for legally blind disability cases in SFY 2024.

Data indicate that costs have decreased proportionally with lower average case lengths. The average case length from initial contact to case closure in SFY 2024, was 860 days, or 2.4 years. This datum represents a decrease in the average case length of 998 days, or 2.7 years, from SFY 2023. In SFY 2024, case length also varied widely by primary disability, ranging from 574 days, or 1.6 years, for auditory/communicative impairment disability cases to 1,561 days, or 4.3 years, for legally blind disability cases.

Partners in Vocational Rehabilitation

The VR Division partners with community resources; providers; federal, state, and local agencies; and employers to provide services, opportunities, and experiences that improve accessibility. All partnerships share in the VR Division's goal of helping customers achieve CIE and play important roles in accomplishing this goal.

State Partnerships

Rehabilitation Council of Texas

Federally mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and amended by WIOA, RCT is the designated state rehabilitation council. RCT helps ensure that Texans with disabilities have access to effective vocational rehabilitation services that result in CIE, independence, and community participation. RCT consists of 15 members who represent the voices and needs of Texas' disabled population. Members are appointed by the governor and serve three-year terms and federal regulations require at least one member to serve as a representative on the Council. Members are

obligated to review and analyze VR-related services, programs, and processes, and to identify and address areas of improvement. The VR Division receives recommendations from RCT, whose input the division is required to address and consider.

RCT assists in creating the VR section of the CSP and provides additional recommendations and input. Similarly, RCT is tasked with providing the Governor and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) commissioner with an annual report, in which RCT highlights VR goals, achievements, statistics, and additional recommendations.

Customer Demographics

The disabilities for which VR services are currently available are ordered into six categories. Those six categories, and their total VR participants,¹ are listed as follows:

Category	Fiscal Year 23	Fiscal Year 24	% of Change
Auditory/Communicative	10,908	11,330	3.9%
Intellectual/Learning	18,305	20,810	13.7%
Legally Blind	3,664	3,716	1.4%
Other Visual	3,691	3,857	4.5%
Physical	15,124	14,848	-1.8%
Psychosocial/Psychological	13,684	14,804	8.2%

Individuals with intellectual/learning impairments made up the largest percentage of customers during both the 2023 and 2024 State Fiscal Years (SFYs). Customers in this category also exhibited the largest growth from year to year, more than 13 percent during the 2024 SFY. Nearly all disability categories experienced growth, with the only decline occurring among individuals with physical impairments. This growth was reflected by an overall increase in participants, by 3,989 individuals, from 2023 to 2024.

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) provides home and community-based services under Medicaid, including waiver programs, The Blind Children's Program, The Office for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services, and Centers for Independent Living.

While HHSC provides services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, and people who are older, VR provides services to persons with any type of disability. Individuals with disabilities may access services from both TWC and HHSC. In this way, HHSC and VR work together to help individuals with disabilities achieve their employment goals. HHSC and VR differ in that HHSC provides long-term services and supports, while VR provides time-limited services. Also, whereas HHSC provides supports to help individuals with daily living (like

¹ See appendix tables 1 and 2 for reference

cooking, cleaning, bathing, etc.), VR services and supports are designed to help disabled individuals specifically obtain and maintain employment.

Local Workforce Development Boards (Local boards)

Local boards provide job seekers with job-search resources and collaborate with VR at the state and local levels to ensure customers receive appropriate services on a timely basis. For example, after an individual completes necessary rehabilitation services, he or she can contact a local workforce center to obtain employment services. Additionally, local boards publish labor market information, which VR counselors use when discussing employment options with customers.

Community Resource Coordination Groups

VR representatives are required to participate in local Community Resource Coordination Groups (CRCGs). Required by SB 298 which became law in 1987, CRCGs are local, county-based groups that include state resources, like VR, and develop service plans for individuals and families who present complex needs. When an individual's needs cross programs administered by multiple agencies, the CRCGs provide interagency coordination and cooperation. In many communities, CRCGs identify service gaps in their area and help plan for appropriate resources to meet their clients' needs.

Area Agencies on Aging

Twenty-eight local Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) around the state provide services for customers identified as needing joint AAA services and the older individuals who are blind (OIB) program. The OIB program assists individuals who are 55 and older and have visual impairments live independently in their home and in the community. Local VR offices maintain contact with these agencies to refer or receive potential referrals when appropriate.

Additional Agencies

Additional agencies that collaborate with the VR Division include the following:

- The Texas Department of State Health Services provides mental health services.
- The Texas Education Agency coordinates services for transition-age students with disabilities.
- The Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired assists with transition to postsecondary life programs.
- The Texas Department of Transportation assists with transportation.
- The Texas Veterans Commission assists with accessing benefits.
- The Texas Department of Insurance's Division of Workers' Compensation ensures that workers' compensation recipients are referred to and can file for VR services.

Federal Partnerships

Rehabilitation Services Administration

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) within the U.S. Department of Education has federal oversight for the VR program in each state. RSA's formula grant program provides the federal funding for VR, Supported Employment, and Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind (ILS-OIB) programs. TWC VR submits an annual State Plan for VR Services, which RSA must approve before federal VR funds can be released to the state, and submits annual reports on information about VR customers. Furthermore, RSA provides training and technical assistance in the administration of the VR programs throughout the year.

Social Security Administration Ticket to Work and Employment Networks

Ticket to Work regulations encourage partnerships between VR agencies and Employment Networks (ENs) to meet the post-employment needs of many SSA disability beneficiaries. The SSA Ticket to Work Partnership Plus Program supports this service delivery model by allowing beneficiaries who require more extensive services, such as physical restoration or assistive technology, to obtain those "upfront" services from the VR agency. After a VR case is closed, the beneficiary has the option of working with an EN for job retention services or other long-term employment support services. In addition to improving the coordination of services between VR agencies and ENs, Partnership Plus increases the likelihood that more SSA disability beneficiaries will achieve self-supporting employment, thus decreasing the need to remain on Social Security benefits. VR addresses services needed to prepare for and obtain employment, while the EN provides job retention and long-term support services to eligible individuals.

Veterans Administration

The VR Division and the U.S. Veterans Administration (VA) offer similar services to disabled veterans. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the agencies identifies how information and resources are shared. The information is used to determine any overlap in services and opportunities for collaboration on cases in the lead agency's outlined demographic areas. The MOU ensures that duplication does not occur between agencies and improves service delivery.

In many cases, VR customers who are veterans do not wish to obtain services from the VA. Other veterans who were not injured in combat are limited as to what services they are eligible to receive from the VA, whereas the VR program serves individuals regardless of how and where they became disabled, as long as they meet eligibility criteria. Numerous VR customers who are veterans are not eligible to receive services from the VA due to their discharge classification. If it were not for the program administered by VR, these veterans would not receive vital services for severe and complex disabilities.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Process

When a customer needs VR services, they may be referred to the VR Division or reach out independently. When establishing initial contact, VR staff will attempt to contact the customer via email, in person, by phone, online, or in writing. Once a preferred method is established, the staff member and customer will complete an application for VR services or schedule its completion within the next 30 days. Following initial contact, the customer will be assigned to a VR counselor. VR counselors are responsible for managing the customer's case and serve as their main point of contact within the VR Division. The VR counselor works closely with the customer in all areas relating to VR, especially when identifying appropriate employment and the best approach in relation to services and assistance.

Determining Eligibility

According to the VRSM, following the completion of, or during, their application process, the customer and VR counselor meet for a diagnostic interview. During the interview, the counselor obtains information that determines eligibility; gathers information about the customer's life, history, and disability; and begins to build rapport. The counselor may purchase additional evaluations, as necessary, if a need for further diagnostic review is determined. Eligibility is determined within 60 days following the completion of the application. To be considered eligible, customers must meet the following requirements:

- qualified personnel have determined that the customer has a physical or mental impairment;
- the customer's physical or mental impairment is a substantial impediment to employment;
- the customer requires VR services to "prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain employment that is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interest, and informed choice"; and
- the customer, upon meeting eligibility, can benefit from VR services in pursuit of employment.

If the customer is determined to be ineligible, their case is closed and they are notified of the determination, provided information on alternative programs, and informed of their right to appeal.

Once the counselor has determined eligibility for VR services, the customer and the counselor collaborate to determine the primary disabilities impacting employment. While the customer may be experiencing multiple disabilities, they are presented with four categories which they may claim as their primary, secondary, or tertiary disability category:

- Blind Sensory/Communicative Impairments;
- Mental Impairments;
- Physical Impairments; and
- Sensory/Communicative Impairments.

Comprehensive Assessment

The VR counselor works with the customer to begin their comprehensive assessment. The comprehensive assessment is an individualized, rolling process that occurs prior to and after creating and implementing the customer's individualized plan for employment (IPE). The goal of the comprehensive assessment is to assess the customer's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests. The information obtained will assist in determining the customer's employment goals, VR needs, and most applicable services.

Individualized Plan for Employment

After completing the comprehensive assessment, the customer and the VR counselor will then collaborate to develop the customer's IPE. The IPE is the plan for achieving CIE in the customer's chosen employment outcome with consideration of their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests. The IPE must be developed, agreed upon, and signed by both the customer and the counselor within 90 days of deeming the customer eligible for VR services.

According to the VRSM, the IPE should include the following:

- **Employment Goal:** The IPE must feature a description of the specific employment goal chosen by the customer and agreed upon by the VR counselor, and a timeline by which this employment goal is expected to be achieved.
- **Education Goal:** If identified, the IPE must feature a description of the specific education goal chosen by the customer and agreed upon by the counselor, that would allow the achievement of the employment goal.
- **Intermediate Objectives:** The intermediate objectives listed in the IPE are necessary, granular steps that will result in achieving the employment goal. These objectives should address any factors affecting participation in the agreed upon VR services, and should include strategies to provide the customer with the necessary skills and/or knowledge needed to achieve CIE.
- **Progress Review:** The IPE will describe the measure used to track and determine successful achievement of the specified employment outcome.
- **Planned Services:** The IPE will include the specific services that are necessary to achieve the customer's employment goal. This should include a timeline for implementing the services, a description of each service, and a description of the chosen providers for the services.
- **Comparable Services and Benefits:** Comparable services and benefits are alternative resources available to customer through other federal, state, or local public agencies or by health insurance, or employee benefits. These resources must be described in the customer's IPE and employed before the use of VR funds. Any exemption to the use of comparable services and benefits must be listed as well.
- **Customer Participation in the Cost of Services:** If the customer's net income exceeds the Basic Living Requirements (BLR), they will be required to share in the cost of services. The IPE

must clearly outline the customer’s responsibility to share in the cost of services, if they are required to do so, as well as any exceptions to this responsibility.

- **Roles and Responsibilities:** The IPE must describe the roles and responsibilities of the counselor and customer. This should include the customer’s responsibility to utilize comparable services and benefits, and the function of those entities providing comparable services and benefits.
- **Frequency of Contact:** The IPE should list the minimum frequency of communication between the counselor and the customer throughout the VR process, which may change as necessary.

Upon completion, the IPE must be agreed to and signed by the customer and the counselor. According to the VRSM, the IPE must be reviewed by the customer and the counselor on an annual basis. If changes are made to the IPE, the customer and the counselor must collaborate on any changes and agree to and sign the resulting amendments.

Case Closure

A case closure may occur for a multitude of reasons. When a case closure occurs, the customer may no longer receive VR services. Customers are allowed to reapply for VR services or appeal their case closure. According to the VRSM, official reasons for a case closure are as follows:

Official Reasons for VR Case Closure	
Achieved Competitive Integrated Employment Outcome	“Customer achieved competitive integrated employment, or supported employment, after receiving services under an IPE.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Completed Pre-ETS, Not Pursuing VR Application	“Student with a disability participated in pre-employment transition services and chose not to apply for VR services. This reason is only available for potentially eligible cases being closed before case assignment/application.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Criminal Offender	“Customer entered a correctional institution (e.g., prison, jail, reformatory, work farm, detention center) or other institution designed for confinement or rehabilitation of criminal offenders (§225 of WIOA).” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Death of the Individual	“Customer passed away during the VR process. No notification is required. Contact with family is only required when TWC-VR is obligated to reclaim equipment.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)

Health/Medical	“Customer is hospitalized or receiving medical treatment that is expected to last longer than 90 days and precludes entry into competitive integrated employment or continued participation in the program.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Not Available for Services – In an Institutional Setting Other than Prison/Jail	“Individual entered an institution other than a prison or jail and will be unavailable to participate in TWC-VR for an indefinite or considerable period. This category of institutions includes hospitals, nursing homes, and residential/psychiatric treatment centers.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Ineligible	“Customer was determined eligible for the VR program; however, the individual was no longer eligible because they no longer wished to seek competitive integrated employment or the individual’s disability prevented the individual’s ability to seek competitive integrated employment.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Ineligible: Disability Too Significant to Benefit from TWC-VR Services	“Following a minimum of two Trial Work Experiences, the customer was determined ineligible because they were unable to benefit, in terms of an employment outcome, due to the severity of their disability.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Ineligible: No Disabling Condition	“Individual is not eligible for VR services because no physical or mental impairment exists.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Ineligible: No Impediment to Employment	“Individual is not eligible for TWC-VR services because the physical or mental impairment does not constitute a substantial impediment to employment.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Ineligible: Does Not Require VR Services	“Individual does not require TWC-VR services to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain gainful employment consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and informed choice.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Currently Not Able to Legally Work in the U.S.	“When the customer's employment authorization documents expire while participating in VR services, they are no longer eligible for VR services and the case must be closed, unless the case is in employment status (which means they are eligible to work).” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)

Ineligible: Pursuant to Section 511	“Customer applied for VR services pursuant to section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act and was determined ineligible because they did not wish to pursue competitive integrated employment. The 14(c) population indicator must be selected in RHW [Rehab Works] to use this closure reason.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
No Longer Interested in Receiving Services or Further Services	“Customer actively chose not to participate or continue in the VR program or when their actions make it impossible to begin or continue the VR process. Examples would include repeated failures to keep appointments for assessment, counseling, or other services.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Reserve Forces Called to Active Duty	“Customer is a member of the National Guard or other reserve military unit of the armed forces and is called to active duty for at least 90 days.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Supported Employment Earning Subminimum Wage	“Customer achieved supported employment in integrated employment but did not earn a competitive wage after exhausting the short-term basis period.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Transferred to Another Agency	“Customer needs services that are more appropriately obtained elsewhere. Transfer to another agency indicates that appropriate referral information is forwarded to the other agency so that agency may provide services more effectively. Includes customers transferred to other VR agencies.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Unable to Locate or Contact	“Customer has relocated or left the State without a forwarding address, or when they have not responded to repeated attempts to contact the individual by mail, telephone, text, or email. Three or more documented attempts must have been made by TWC-VR staff.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Pre-ETS Unable to Locate or Contact	“A potentially eligible student with a disability has relocated or left the State without a forwarding address, or when they have not responded to repeated attempts to contact the individual by mail, telephone, text, or email. Three or more documented attempts must have been made by TWC-VR staff.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)

Extended Employment	“Individuals who received TWC-VR services and were placed in a nonintegrated or sheltered setting for a public or private nonprofit agency or organization that provides compensation in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (34 CFR §361.5(c)(18)).” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Extended Services Not Available	“Individual has received TWC-VR services but requires long-term extended services for which no long-term source of funding is available. This code is used only for individuals who have received TWC-VR services.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
Transportation Not Feasible	“Customer actively chose not to participate or continue in the VR program or when their actions make it impossible to begin or continue the VR process because sufficient transportation is not feasible.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)
All Other Reasons:	“Customers case is closed for reasons not otherwise described.” (Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual, 2025)

Employment/Successful Closure

A case is determined to be successfully closed when the customer has maintained full- or part-time employment for at least 90 days and is consistent with the employment goals described in the IPE. Customers receive notification and information on post-employment services when their case is closed.

In Program Year (PY) 2023², 10,197 of the 20,570 participants who exited the VR program achieved competitive integrated employment at case closure. The employment rate for Texas was 49.5 percent, which was over seven percentage points higher than the national rate of 42 percent for PY 2023.

Over the 2023 and 2024 SFYs, the VR Division achieved more than 10,000 successful case closures,³ approximately 89 percent of closures were for participants over 22 years of age, and 11 percent for participants under 22 years of age and under.

² The timeframe used for national comparison is July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024

³ See appendix tables 3 and 4 for reference

Services and Categories

The VR Division offers many services, tailored to the meet the needs of a wide variety of disabilities among the population of eligible customers served. To efficiently supply those services, the VR Division relies on its partners, providers, and staff and aims to effectively serve all customers.

Providers and Categories

VR programs rely on a network of providers to deliver services that help individuals with disabilities achieve their employment goals. These providers, which can include employers, community resources, and local agencies, are either contracted to provide specific *purchased services* or offer *in-house* and *arranged* services through VR staff or agreements with external entities. When a provider is contracted to provide a purchased service, they agree to receiving TWC authorized rates as payment for their service. When a contracted provider receives payment on an active contract during the SFY, they are referred to as an active contracted provider.

Providers must go through a competitive, or open-enrollment, procurement process to be contracted. Providers must also meet the specifications and requirements of the contract and maintain compliance with all chapters of the VR-SFP. Note, contracted providers are a subset of all vendors providing services to VR customers. Providers may assist, or be contracted to assist, in all service categories.

The selection of appropriate services is a collaborative process between the VR counselor and the customer. To include a service in the customer's IPE, the service must be deemed necessary to achieving the agreed upon employment outcome and directly address barriers to employment. Though there is a wide breadth of services that may be considered, each specific service falls into a more general category targeting unique aspects of a customer's needs.

The following section details various service categories, descriptions, and trends in both the number of external providers⁴ and customers⁵ served over the last two SFYs.

Service	External Providers	Customers Receiving Purchased Service
All Pre-Employment Transition Related Services: Pre-ETS services are designed to support students with disabilities, aged 14-22, as they transition from school and into employment or postsecondary education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2023 SFY: 956• 2024 SFY: 863• Percentage of Change: - 9.7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2023 SFY: 7,752• 2024 SFY: 8,940• Percentage of Change: 15.3%

⁴ See appendix tables 5 and 6 for reference

⁵ See appendix table 7 for reference

Assessment and Diagnostic Services: Assessment and Diagnostic services are designed to identify options that will allow the customer to obtain effective employment and operate as independently as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 2,498 • 2024 SFY: 2,259 • Percentage of Change: -9.6% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 16,818 • 2024 SFY: 16,207 • Percentage of Change: -3.6%
Assistive Technology Services: Assistive Technology services are designed to assist a customer who is blind or significantly visually impaired make informed choices about which assistive technology products best meet their needs and instruct how to use them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 279 • 2024 SFY: 220 • Percentage of Change: -21.1% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 2,450 • 2024 SFY: 2,509 • Percentage of Change: 2.4%
Disability Related Skills Training Services: Disability Related Skills Training services refers to instruction, support, and practical application designed to teach individuals with disabilities specific skills that directly address barriers to employment caused by their disability. These skills are not general job skills, but rather skills that mitigate the impact of the disability on the individual's ability to participate in the workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 86 • 2024 SFY: 95 • Percentage of Change: 10.5% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 675 • 2024 SFY: 771 • Percentage of Change: 14.2%
Hearing Aid Services: Hearing Aid and related services allow for the possibility of hearing aid obtainment through VR authorized purchasing, assuming it is necessary and expected to improve the customer's ability to participate in VR services that lead to the attainment of employment goals listed in the customer's IPE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 389 • 2024 SFY: 378 • Percentage of Change: -2.8% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 5,050 • 2024 SFY: 5,621 • Percentage of Change: 11.3%
Job Placement Services: Job Placement services are designed to assist customers in securing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 217 • 2024 SFY: 216 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 2,226 • 2024 SFY: 2,253

suitable employment that matches their skills, interests, and abilities, while ultimately leading to increased independence and quality of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of Change: -0.5% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of Change: 1.2%
Job Readiness Training and Augmentative Services: Job Readiness Training and Augmentative services are designed to prepare participants so that they may obtain and maintain employment that is aligned with their identified employment outcome.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023 SFY: 187 2024 SFY: 189 Percentage of Change: 1.1% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023 SFY: 1,040 2024 SFY: 1,037 Percentage of Change: -0.3%
Maintenance Services: Maintenance services are designed to provide customers with monetary support for expenses that exceed their normal living expenses due to their participation in VR services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023 SFY: 349 2024 SFY: 384 Percentage of Change: 10.0% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023 SFY: 1,315 2024 SFY: 1,369 Percentage of Change: 4.1%
Medical Restorative Services: Medical Restorative services are designed to address physical and mental impairments that significantly restrict a customer's ability to obtain or maintain employment. These services can include corrective surgery, physical therapy, dentistry, and psychological treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023 SFY: 947 2024 SFY: 848 Percentage of Change: -10.6% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023 SFY: 3,994 2024 SFY: 3,422 Percentage of Change: -14.3%
On the Job Training Services: On the Job Training services are designed to compensate employers for training a VR customer who has been hired and into a competitive, integrated position and receives fair and equal pay and benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023 SFY: 194 2024 SFY: 182 Percentage of Change: -6.2% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023 SFY: 904 2024 SFY: 777 Percentage of Change: -14.0%
Orthotics and Prosthetic Services: Orthotics and Prosthetics services are provided to enhance a customer's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023 SFY: 136 2024 SFY: 106 Percentage of Change: -22.1% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023 SFY: 426 2024 SFY: 292 Percentage of Change: -31.5%

employability or ability to perform daily living activities which will lead to employment.		
Postsecondary Education and Training Services: Postsecondary Education and Training services are designed to not only support customers while participating in postsecondary education but to also educate customers on all the services they may utilize as a postsecondary student, including financial aid.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 1,247 • 2024 SFY: 1,334 • Percentage of Change: 7.0% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 7,068 • 2024 SFY: 8,376 • Percentage of Change: 18.5%
Psychological Testing Services: Psychological Testing services may be provided to determine eligibility or to fully participate in VR services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 131 • 2024 SFY: 120 • Percentage of Change: -8.4% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 2,737 • 2024 SFY: 2,578 • Percentage of Change: -5.8%
Supported Employment Services: Supported Employment services are designed to help customers with the most significant disabilities obtain employment. These services can include intensive job skills training, arrangements of extended services, and individualized job development and placement services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 130 • 2024 SFY: 134 • Percentage of Change: 3.1% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 1,462 • 2024 SFY: 1,647 • Percentage of Change: 12.7%
Transportation Services: Transportation services are designed to act as financial support that is paid directly to a customer who requires transportation assistance. Funds can be used for recurring or nonrecurring public or private transportation and airfare.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 575 • 2024 SFY: 569 • Percentage of Change: -1% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 2,142 • 2024 SFY: 2,010 • Percentage of Change: -6.2%
Vehicle Modification Services: Vehicle Modification services are designed to assist customers with transportation by modifying their personal vehicle to improve accessibility and usability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 67 • 2024 SFY: 72 • Percentage of Change: 7.5% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 338 • 2024 SFY: 388 • Percentage of Change: 14.8%

Work-Based Learning Services: Work-Based Learning services are designed to provide the customer with applicable education and experience opportunities that take place in, after, or outside of the traditional school setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 112 • 2024 SFY: 120 • Percentage of Change: 7.1% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 SFY: 793 • 2024 SFY: 744 • Percentage of Change: -6.2%

Overarching Service Categories

The VR Division offers a diverse range of services designed to support individuals with disabilities in achieving their employment and independent living goals. Recognizing that each individual's needs are unique, not all services will be suitable or accessible to every customer. To help individuals understand the services that may be available to them, the VR Division organizes its comprehensive services into six overarching categories, which are highlighted on their website. These categories are summarized below, along with their respective descriptions and eligibility requirements:

Category	Eligibility Requirements
Vocational Rehabilitation – Adults: Assist disabled adults by providing services that help prepare for work, discover new jobs, keep their existing job, and/or advance in their current job.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer has a disability that acts as a barrier to successful employment. • Customer displays a need for services assisting with employment discovery and preparation. • Customer displays a need for services that assist in finding and obtaining employment. • Customer displays a need for services that assist in maintaining and advancing in employment.
Vocational Rehabilitation – Youth and Students: Assist disabled youth and students by providing services that intend to ease the transition from secondary education into postsecondary education and/or employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer is between the ages of 14 and 22 • Customer has a disability that acts as a barrier to successful employment. • Customer displays a need for services assisting with employment discovery and preparation. • Customer displays a need for services that assist in finding and obtaining employment. • Customer displays a need for services that assist in maintaining and advancing in employment. • Customer is a current student—for participation in student services.

<p>Vocational Rehabilitation – Business Relations: A partnership with employers to assist in understanding the needs of disabled communities and connecting those employers with job seekers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be an employer.
<p>Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) Services: Assist older individuals who are blind in attaining independence within their personal lives and local community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer is 55 or older. • Customer has a significant visual impairment. • Customer’s visual impairment creates a significant barrier to an independent lifestyle. • Customer will receive significant improvements in mobility and independent living through OIB services.
<p>Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center (CCRC) Program: A residential training facility that prepares individuals who are blind for employment and independent living.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Customer is legally blind. ○ Customer is 18 or older. ○ Customer is a Texas resident. ○ Customer has been referred to CCRC by Texas Workforce VR staff. • For Acceptance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Customer is able to participate in full-time training. ○ Customer is able to manage their daily hygiene, health, and medication. ○ Customer is able to attend regular classes and demonstrate progress. ○ Customer displays transferable skills from one setting to another. ○ Customer displays socially acceptable behavior and lives cooperatively in an adult residential setting.

<p>Business Enterprises of Texas (BET) Program: Assist legally blind individuals by providing employment training services and entrepreneurial opportunities in the food service and vending operations space.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer is federally considered as legally blind. • Customer is a U.S. citizen. • Customer is physically located in Texas. • Customer is 18 or older. • Customer is a high school graduate or GED holder. • Customer is considered generally healthy and can provide eye and physical examination records. • Customer has successfully completed BET training and licensing requirements. • Customer has been referred to CCRC by Texas Workforce VR staff.
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Additional programs include the Purchasing from People with Disabilities Program and Vocational Rehabilitation Self Employment Services.

Innovation and Process Improvement

The VR Division focuses on three strategic areas to support continuous improvement and innovation: investing in staff development, fully integrating into the workforce system, and providing exceptional customer service.

1. *Investing in Staff Development:* Resources are continuously dedicated to ongoing training and professional development, particularly in specialized areas like mental health, services for veterans, and support for individuals with specific disabilities. Other internal strategies include redesigning the VRSM and refining performance monitoring through initiatives like Monitoring, Oversight, and Internal Controls (MOSAIC), which is a robust case review and monitoring system to analyze and track performance.
2. *Fully Integrating into the Workforce System:* The VR Division is actively working to strengthen partnerships within the workforce system. In this spirit, a cross-agency workgroup has developed recommendations and ongoing initiatives which include:
 - Integrate VR offices into workforce centers to eliminate service duplication and improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.
 - Consolidate employer relations and service coordination, which includes an active pilot project in select offices to improve the referral process between agencies.
 - Promote provider engagement and support through improved procurement and payment processes, enhanced communication, and rate increases. This includes:
 - Increase staff productivity, improve the speed of payments, and pilot a provider invoicing and payment process to reduce administrative burden.

- Implement rate changes for contracted employment services, targeting an October 1 live date for 53 rate changes scheduled for SFY 2026.

3. *Providing Exceptional Customer Service:* The VR Division continues to offer responsive and timely support through strategies designed to streamline the initial engagement process like “Start My VR”—an online self-referral option for customers—and the Rapid Engagement Team, where intake specialists respond to electronic inquiries and a telephone hotline. Additionally, the VR Division is expanding options for remote service delivery and is utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) technology including Semi-Autonomous Research Assistant (SARA) and SARA Video to streamline tasks, improve engagement, and ensure secure communication.

Students with Disabilities

According to analysis of data received from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the number of students aged 14-21 receiving Special Education and 504 Plan services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in School Year (SY) 2023-2024 was approximately 389,350 compared to around 332,700 in SY 2021-2022—an increase of 17 percent.

VR has expanded total students served with Pre-ETS to meet this growing need. The annual number of unique customers receiving Pre-ETS services increased from 14,173 in SFY 2022 to 16,799 in SFY 2024,⁶ reflecting a growth of 18.5 percent.

To be classified as a student with a disability, a VR customer must be enrolled in a secondary or postsecondary education or training program and be younger than 22 years of age as of September 1 of the SFY VR services will be provided. Overall, the number of students with disabilities at any phase of the VR customer pipeline increased by 26.5 percent, from 28,196 in SFY 2021 to 35,673 in SFY 2024.

SFY	Students (All Phases)
2021	28,196
2022	30,991
2023	34,555
2024	35,673

Pre-employment Training Services

To address the expanding need for Pre-ETS, the VR Division has improved accessibility by increasing the number of Pre-ETS contracted providers and expanding the Pre-ETS offered

⁶ See appendix table 8 for reference

through statewide initiatives. Initiatives include Embedded Pre-ETS, Explore STEM, Explore Apprenticeship, Group Skills Trainings, Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL), and Year-Round Work Experience.

The VR Division has achieved statewide access to Pre-ETS services although there remains a need to engage with customers in more sparsely populated, rural counties in the state. To improve engagement with these customers, the VR Pre-ETS team has launched initiatives to expand service delivery to rural and disadvantaged school districts.

Focus has also gone toward improving employment outcomes for youth with disabilities, resulting in a significant expansion of Pre-ETS which services those between 14 and 22. From 2021–2024, there has been an increase in both service provision and purchased services, especially in PSET. This increase has resulted from enhanced service delivery, which made way under the division’s Customer First Strategy. This approach emphasizes evidence-based career and training services to increase both the quantity and quality of employment outcomes leading to career pathways, increased earnings, and competitive wages—such as Pre-ETS and PSET.

Current Pre-ETS initiatives include:

- SEAL: Paid summer work experience
- Explore STEM!: Camps exposing students to careers in science, technology, engineering, and math
- Student HireAbility Navigators (SHNs): Building community connections for students
- Pre-ETS Elective Course Curriculum: A semester-long curriculum exploring options for secondary students
- Pre-ETS Tools for Students: A module on the Texas OnCourse platform and a parent tool called Tomorrow Ready Texas
- Capacity Building: Meetings for VR/school partnership feedback
- Other strategies: Project SEARCH (business integration), Year-Round Paid Work Experience (PWE), and Work-Based Learning Projects for Youth (school-based enterprises)

From SFY 2021 to 2024, VR experienced a 35 percent increase in unique customers receiving Pre-ETS, from 12,442 to 16,799, as well as a 58.4 percent increase in unique customers receiving PSET, from 5,597 to 8,867.⁷

Contracted Provider Improvements

The 2020 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) identified challenges such as provider shortages, low reimbursement rates, and service inefficiencies. In response, TWC launched the ‘Procurement and Provision of VR Customer Goods and Services’ Business

⁷ See appendix table 8 for reference

Transformation (BT) Project, which focused on recruiting and retaining contracted vendors. Examples of contracted services include job placement, post-secondary education and training, supported employment, Pre-ETS, assistive technology, and medical/hospital services. By the 2023 CSNA, the VR Division had achieved significant progress through reduced paperwork, streamlined administrative processes, and an increased number of active contracted providers,⁸ as well as an increased number of customers receiving purchased contracted services.

Conclusion

The Vocational Rehabilitation Division's commitment to innovation is fundamentally aimed at enhancing the breadth and quality of services delivered to Texans with disabilities. Modernizations such as the "Start My VR" portal and AI-powered technologies such as SARA directly support a more responsive and streamlined customer service delivery model. This focus is important, as evidenced by the growth in customers seeking essential support, particularly in Pre-ETS and PSET. The successful delivery of these and other tailored services hinges on a robust and agile network of both dedicated internal staff and external providers.

To that end, the division is working to secure additional funding and initiating business transformations to recruit and retain contracted vendors through improved processes and rate adjustments. The division is also investing in its own workforce through ongoing training and professional development. These strategic actions are designed to support a more resilient and effective VR system that will continue empowering Texans with disabilities, enabling them to thrive in the Texas workforce and build a more inclusive and economically vibrant state.

⁸ See appendix table 9 for reference

Glossary

This glossary has been constructed using the [Vocational Rehabilitation Standards for Providers Manual's](#) definitions, so far as they relate to, or provide a greater understanding of specific terms, used throughout this report.

Appeal: A formal process for reconsideration of a VR decision per TWC rules (40 TAC Chapter 850, Subchapter E), triggered by the timely filing of VR1505, Request for Due Process Hearing and Mediation because of a customer's dissatisfaction with a VR decision about providing or denying services.

Arranged Service: Payment method used on a service record to describe a good or service that will be purchased by some source other and the VR Division.

Assessment: Services provided, and activities performed to determine an individual's eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services and/or the nature and scope of VR services to be included in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Included here are trial work experiences and extended evaluation. Assessments to determine eligibility, assignment of a priority category, or the nature or scope of services to be included on the IPE include, but are not limited to, psychological assessments; audiological evaluations; dental and medical exams; and other assessments of personality, interests, interpersonal skills, intelligence and related functional capacities, educational achievements, work experience, vocational aptitudes, personal and social adjustments, and employment opportunities for the individual. Also considered are the medical, psychiatric, psychological, and other pertinent vocational, educational, cultural, social, recreational, and environmental factors that affect the employment, and rehabilitation needs of the individual. [34 CFR 361.5(b)(6) and 34 CFR 361.48]

Assistive Technology Service: "Any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device." [29 U.S.C. §§705(4) and 3002(5)]

The term *assistive technology service* means any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. Such term includes—

(A) the evaluation of the assistive technology needs of an individual with a disability, including a functional evaluation of the impact of the provision of appropriate assistive technology and appropriate services to the individual in the customary environment of the individual;

(B) a service consisting of purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of assistive technology devices by individuals with disabilities;

(C) a service consisting of selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, replacing, or donating assistive technology devices;

(D) coordination and use of necessary therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices, such as therapies, interventions, or services associated with education and rehabilitation plans and programs;

(E) training or technical assistance for an individual with a disability or, where appropriate, the family members, guardians, advocates, or authorized representatives of such an individual;

(F) training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals providing education and rehabilitation services and entities that manufacture or sell assistive technology devices), employers, providers of employment and training services, or other individuals who provide services to, employ, or are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of individuals with disabilities; and

(G) a service consisting of expanding the availability of access to technology.

Blind Children's Program: Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program is administered by Texas Health & Human Services Commission (HHSC) effective September 1, 2016. This program provides rehabilitation services for blind and visually impaired children between the ages of birth and 22 years of age and their families to assist the child to develop the concepts and skills needed to realize their full potential.

Business Enterprises of Texas (BET): Business Enterprises of Texas (BET) serves people who are legally blind by training them for careers managing food service facilities throughout Texas. Pursuant to Texas Labor Code §355.016, TWC is authorized to administer the Business Enterprises Program in accordance with the provisions of the Randolph-Sheppard Act (20 U.S.C. §107 et seq.).

Comparable Services and Benefits: "Services and benefits, including accommodations and auxiliary aids and services, that are -

(A) Provided or paid for, in whole or in part, by other Federal, State, or local public agencies, by health insurance, or by employee benefits;

(B) Available to the individual at the time needed to ensure the progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome in the individual's individualized plan for employment in accordance with §361.53; and

(C) Commensurate to the services that the individual would otherwise receive from the designated State vocational rehabilitation agency.

(ii) For the purposes of this definition, comparable services and benefits do not include awards and scholarships based on merit." [34 CFR §361.5(c)(8)]

Competitive Integrated Employment: “Means work that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis (including self-employment) and for which an individual is compensated at a rate that-

(A) Is not less than the higher of the rate specified in section 6(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 206(a)(1)) or the rate required under the applicable State or local minimum wage law for the place of employment;

(B) Is not less than the customary rate paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by other employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who are similarly situated in similar occupations by the same employer and who have similar training, experience, and skills; and

(C) In the case of an individual who is self-employed, yields an income that is comparable to the income received by other individuals who are not individuals with disabilities and who are self-employed in similar occupations or on similar tasks and who have similar training, experience, and skills; and

(D) Is eligible for the level of benefits provided to other employees; and

Is at a location—

(A) Typically found in the community; and

(B) Where the employee with a disability interacts for the purpose of performing the duties of the position with other employees within the particular work unit and the entire work site, and, as appropriate to the work performed, other persons (*e.g.*, customers and vendors), who are not individuals with disabilities (not including supervisory personnel or individuals who are providing services to such employee) to the same extent that employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who are in comparable positions interact with these persons; and

Presents, as appropriate, opportunities for advancement that are similar to those for other employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who have similar positions.” [34 CFR §361.5(c) (9)]

Contract: A contract is a legally binding document issued by TWC that includes all terms and conditions and is signed by both TWC and the Contractor.

Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center (CCRC): A comprehensive vocational rehabilitation training facility for blind and visually impaired customers operated by the Texas Workforce Commission. CCRC staff works in partnership with customers and staff toward the accomplishment of employment and independent living goals. CCRC provides nonvisual evaluation, and training services in a residential/community setting.

Designated State Unit: “The State vocational rehabilitation bureau, division, or other organizational unit that is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and

other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and that is responsible for the administration of the vocational rehabilitation program of the State agency, as required under §361.13(b); or

The State agency that is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities.” [34 CFR §361.5(c) (13)]

Employment Outcome: “Means, with respect to an individual, entering, advancing in, or retaining full-time or, if appropriate, part-time competitive integrated employment, as defined in paragraph (c)(9) of this section (including customized employment, self-employment, telecommuting, or business ownership), or supported employment as defined in paragraph (c)(53) of this section, that is consistent with an individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.” [34 CFR 361.5(c) (15)]

Employment Service Provider (ESP): A provider that has a contract with VR to provide work-oriented services to customers. Employment Services Provider was previously referred to as a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP).

Entity (Contracting): The business requesting or that has been granted a contract with VR to provide services on behalf of VR customers. Also, referred to as provider.

Extended Services: “Ongoing support services and other appropriate services that are—

- (i) Needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability including a youth with a most significant disability, in supported employment;
- (ii) Organized or made available, singly or in combination, in such a way as to assist an eligible individual in maintaining supported employment;
- (iii) Based on the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an individualized plan for employment;
- (iv) Provided by a State agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer, or any other appropriate resource, after an individual has made the transition from support from the designated State unit; and
- (v) Provided to a youth with a most significant disability by the designated State unit in accordance with requirements set forth in this part and part 363 for a period not to exceed four years, or at such time that a youth reaches age 25 and no longer meets the definition of a youth with a disability under paragraph (c) (58) of this section, whichever occurs first. The designated State unit may not provide extended services to an individual with a most significant disability who is not a youth with a most significant disability.” [34 CFR §361.5(c) (19)]

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE): A plan for employment that must be designed to achieve a specific employment outcome, as defined in 34 CFR §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. [34 CFR 361.45]

Informed Choice: Information and assistance in the selection of vocational rehabilitation services and service providers that are needed to achieve the individual's employment outcome. [34 CFR §361.52(c)]

In-House Providers: TWC staff member that is not a member of the caseload carrying staff (CCS) and that provides direct services to customers at the request of the CCS, such as training by a VR vocational rehabilitation teacher, the Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center (CCRC), the Assistive Technology Unit (ATU), or a vocational evaluation by a Vocational Diagnostic Unit staff member.

Job Readiness Training: Training provided to prepare an individual for the world of work (for example, appropriate work behaviors, getting to work on time, appropriate dress and grooming, and increasing productivity).

Maintenance Services: Monetary support provided to an individual for expenses, such as food, shelter, and clothing, that are in excess of the normal expenses of the individual and that are necessitated by the individual's participation in an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs or the individual's receipt of vocational rehabilitation services under an individualized plan for employment. [34 CFR Section 361.5(34)]

Monitoring, Oversight, and Internal Controls (MOSAIC): A VR process for monitoring, oversight, and internal controls. The VR case review system and monitoring processes are applied to analyze and track performance via case reviews based on areas of highest risk. The process includes oversight at state, regional, unit and caseload levels. [Texas Human Resource Code 117.092]

Most Significant Disability: An individual with a disability who has a severe physical or mental impairment that seriously limits one or more functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome. Their vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period. [34 CFR §361.5 (30)]

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS): Pre-employment transition services include the following required activities: (i) job exploration counseling; (ii) work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after-school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible; (iii) counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education; (iv) workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and (v) instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring. [34 CFR §361.48(a)]

Provider: Any individual or business from which VR can obtain goods and services for customers.

Purchased Good and or Services: A good or service that is acquired on behalf of a customer by using VR funds.

Rehabilitation Technology Services: Services that provide or help customers obtain adaptive modifications, such as wheelchairs and lifts, that address the barriers confronted by individuals

with significant disabilities, including barriers to education, rehabilitation, employment, transportation, independent living, or recreation.

Service Provider (SP): A term used to represent entities, either agencies or individuals, approved to provide services to individuals with disabilities served by VR. Sometimes interchanged with the term *provider*.

Standards for Providers Manual: Manual for VR providers that includes contract terms and conditions standards that ensure accountability and quality of services to VR customers.

Student with a Disability: An individual who is attending school in a recognized educational setting, which may include public schools, private schools, home schooling, post-secondary, or other recognized setting such as schooling provided by juvenile justice facilities. In Texas, the definition of student with a disability is an individual 14-22 years of age enrolled in school who is receiving or has received services through special education or is considered 504 eligible. [34 CFR §200.103 (c)]

Supported Employment: Service that is offered to customers with the most significant disabilities. Supported employment enables them to enter competitive integrated employment by providing individualized assistance in finding an appropriate job match and establishing extended services and long-term supports within the work environment. [34 CFR 361(b)]

Ticket to Work Program (TTW): Voluntary SSA program offered to individuals ages 18 to 64 who are receiving SSI or SSDI. TTW offers free job training and employment referrals, among other benefits: Services are provided by an employment network (EN) or by the VR program.

Transition Services: “A coordinated set of activities that promote the transition from school to post-school occupations and services that include post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, and/or community participation. Transition services *must promote or facilitate the achievement of the employment outcome identified in the student’s individualized plan for employment (IPE).” [34 CFR Section 361.5(b) (55)]

Transportation Services: “Travel and related expenses that are necessary to enable an applicant or eligible individual to participate in a vocational rehabilitation service, including expenses for training in the use of public transportation vehicles and systems.” [34 CFR §361.5 (56)]

Trial Work Experience: Planned activities that support the exploration of the individual’s abilities, capabilities, and capacity to perform in work situations, including supported employment, on-the-job training, and other experiences using real work settings.

Vendor: An individual or business entity that offers goods or services to the state for sale, lease, lease-purchase, or contract. Vendors are sometimes referred to as providers.

Vocational Assessment: A global appraisal of an individual's work and training background, general functional capacities, and social and behavioral characteristics.

Vocational Evaluation: A specific process involving the appraisal of an individual's work-related characteristics, which is important for education and training to obtain and maintain employment.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC): A qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor employed by VR to lead the customer in the process of gaining skills and services needed for the customer to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment consistent with the customer's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

Vocational Services: Any services designed to achieve or maintain employment.

Youth with a Disability: An individual with a disability, not younger than 14 years of age; and not older than 24 years of age. The disability only has to be considered most significant if they are also participating in Supported Employment services.

Appendix

Table 1

VR Participants by Disability, SFY 2024

Disability	Under 22	Under 22 - Percent Total	22 and Over	22 and Over - Percent Total	Grand Total	Percentage
Auditory/Communicative Impairment	1,348	6%	9,982	21%	11,330	16%
Intellectual/Learning Impairment	13,326	59%	7,484	16%	20,810	30%
Legally Blind	692	3%	3,024	6%	3,716	5%
Other Visual Impairment	929	4%	2,928	6%	3,857	6%
Physical Impairment	1,486	7%	13,362	29%	14,848	21%
Psychosocial/Psychological Impairment	4,810	21%	9,994	21%	14,804	21%
Grand Total	22,591	100%	46,774	100%	69,365	100%

Table 2

VR Participants by Disability, SFY 2023

Disability	Under 22	Under 22 - Percent Total	22 and Over	22 and Over - Percent Total	Grand Total	Percentage
Auditory/Communicative Impairment	1,247	6%	9,661	21%	10,908	17%
Intellectual/Learning Impairment	11,289	57%	7,016	15%	18,305	28%
Legally Blind	769	4%	2,895	6%	3,664	6%
Other Visual Impairment	896	5%	2,795	6%	3,691	6%
Physical Impairment	1,391	7%	13,733	30%	15,124	23%
Psychosocial/Psychological Impairment	4,104	21%	9,580	21%	13,684	21%
Grand Total	19,696	100%	45,680	100%	65,376	100%

Table 3

Successful Case Closures by Occupation, SFY 2023

Total Successful Closures, All Ages (SFY 2023)	10,598
Successful Closures, Under Age 22	1,215
Successful Closures, 22 and Over	9,383

<u>Successful Closures by Occupation (Grouping of SOC Major Codes)</u>	<u>Successful VR Closures, All Ages</u>
Service Occupations	2,037
Office and Administrative Support	1,731
Transportation and Material Moving	1,653
Education, Legal, Community Service, Arts, and Media	1,256
Healthcare Practitioners, Technical, and Healthcare Support	959
Management, Business, and Financial	858
Sales and Related Occupations	620
Production Occupations	422
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	395
Computer, Engineering, and Science	346
Construction and Extraction	280
All Other Occupations	41

Table 4

Successful Case Closures by Occupation, SFY 2024

Total Successful Closures, All Ages (SFY2024)	10,097
Successful Closures, Under Age 22	1,151
Successful Closures, 22 and Over	8,946

<u>Successful Closures by Occupation (Grouping of SOC Major Codes)</u>	<u>Successful VR Closures, All Ages</u>
Service Occupations	1,975
Office and Administrative Support	1,614
Transportation and Material Moving	1,504
Education, Legal, Community Service, Arts, and Media	1,193
Management, Business, and Financial	880
Healthcare Practitioners, Technical, and Healthcare Support	874
Sales and Related Occupations	603
Production Occupations	395
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	381
Computer, Engineering, and Science	325
Construction and Extraction	309
All Other Occupations	44

Table 5

Active Providers by Service Category (Purchased Services Only), SFY 2023

	SFY 2023		
VR Service Category	Number of Customers Receiving Purchased Service	Number of External Vendors Providing Services	Avg. Customers Served per Active Provider
All Pre-ETS Related Services	7,752	956	8
Assessment and Diagnostic Services	16,818	2,498	7
Assistive Technology Services	2,450	279	9
Disability Related Skills Training	675	86	8
Hearing Aid Services	5,050	389	13
Job Placement Services	2,226	217	10
Job Readiness Training and Augmentative Services	1,040	187	6
Maintenance Services	1,315	349	4
Medical Restorative Services	3,994	947	4
On the Job Training Services	904	194	5
Orthotics and Prosthetic Services	426	136	3
Postsecondary Education and Training Services	7,068	1,247	6
Psychological Testing Services	2,737	131	21
Supported Employment Services	1,462	130	11
Transportation Services	2,142	575	4
Vehicle Modification Services	338	67	5
Work-Based Learning Services	793	112	7
All Purchased Service Categories (Distinct)	39,237	6,057	6.5

Table 6

Active Providers by Service Category (Purchased Services Only), SFY 2024

	SFY 2024			
VR Service Category	Number of Customers Receiving Purchased Service	Number of External Vendors Providing Services	Avg. Customers Served per Active Provider	Customers with Purchased Services, 2024 vs. 2023 (%)
All Pre-ETS Related Services	8,940	863	10	115.33%
Assessment and Diagnostic Services	16,207	2,259	7	96.37%
Assistive Technology Services	2,509	220	11	102.41%
Disability Related Skills Training	771	95	8	114.22%
Hearing Aid Services	5,621	378	15	111.31%
Job Placement Services	2,253	216	10	101.21%
Job Readiness Training and Augmentative Services	1,037	189	5	99.71%
Maintenance Services	1,369	384	4	104.11%
Medical Restorative Services	3,422	848	4	85.68%
On the Job Training Services	777	182	4	85.95%
Orthotics and Prosthetic Services	292	106	3	68.54%
Postsecondary Education and Training Services	8,376	1,334	6	118.51%
Psychological Testing Services	2,578	120	21	94.19%
Supported Employment Services	1,647	134	12	112.65%
Transportation Services	2,010	569	4	93.84%
Vehicle Modification Services	388	72	5	114.79%
Work-Based Learning Services	744	120	6	93.82%
All Purchased Service Categories (Distinct)	41,309	5,789	7.1	105.28%

Table 7

Customers Receiving Services – All, SFY 2023 – SFY 2024

	SFY 2023	SFY 2024	
VR Service Category	Number of Customers Receiving Purchased, Arranged or VR Staff Provided Services	Number of Customers Receiving Purchased, Arranged or VR Staff Provided Services	Customers with Service, 2024 vs. 2023 (%)
All Pre-ETS Related Services	16,587	16,799	101.28%
Assessment and Diagnostic Services	16,815	16,199	96.34%
Assistive Technology Services	2,450	2,502	102.12%
Hearing Aid Services	5,051	5,622	111.30%
Job Placement Services	2,226	2,248	100.99%
Job Readiness Training and Augmentative Services	1,040	1,036	99.62%
Maintenance Services	1,314	1,369	104.19%
Medical Restorative Services	4,010	3,419	85.26%
On the Job Training Services	904	777	85.95%
Orthotics and Prosthetic Services	426	292	68.54%
Postsecondary Education and Training Services	7,683	8,867	115.41%
Psychological Testing Services	2,737	2,578	94.19%
Supported Employment Services	1,465	1,654	112.90%
Transportation Services	2,317	2,145	92.58%
Vehicle Modification Services	338	388	114.79%
Work-Based Learning Services	792	744	93.94%
All Service Categories (Distinct)	46,492	47,687	102.57%
All Service Categories plus Counseling & Guidance (Distinct)	56,477	58,586	103.73%

Table 8

Pre-ETS and PSET Service Provision, SFY 2021 – SFY 2024

SFY	All Customers with Pre-ETS (Purchased or VR Staff Provided)	All Customers with Post Sec Education and Training (Purchased or Arranged)
2021	12,442	5,597
2022	14,173	6,524
2023	16,587	7,683
2024	16,799	8,867

Table 9

Contracted Vendors and Service Recipients, SFY 2019 – 2024

SFY	Active Contracted Providers	Contracted Service Authorizations	Average Service Authorizations per Contracted Provider	Contracted Purchased Services Customers	Average Customers Served by Contracted Provider
2019	749	32,002	42.7	17,232	23.0
2020	643	27,753	43.2	15,204	23.6
2021	653	31,105	47.6	16,649	25.5
2022	724	37,219	51.4	19,726	27.2
2023	710	37,649	53.0	20,638	29.1
2024	673	40,936	60.8	21,689	32.2

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