# Vocational Rehabilitation Standards for Providers Chapter 20: Premiums

Effective June 3, 2019

## 20.1 Overview of Premiums

Premiums are payments made to contractors in addition to the base rate paid for services.

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## 20.3 Autism Premium

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### 20.3.2 Process and Procedures

A contracted provider's staff member who provides a direct service to the customer must:

* meet the staff qualifications identified for the base service; and
* maintain a current UNTWISE Autism Endorsement.

The contracted provider receives authorization for the Autism Premium through a service authorization. The service authorization for the Autism Premium for:

* Bundled Job Placement must be received when the service authorization for Bundled Job Placement Benchmark A is received;
* Nonbundled Job Placement must be received when the service authorization for the base service is received; and
* Supported Employment:
  + Benchmark 1B must be received when the service authorization for Benchmark 1A is received
  + Benchmarks 2-6, must be received when the service authorization for Benchmark 2 is received.

The referral and/or service authorization identifies the categories in which the customer may need intervention to remove barriers related to the customer's diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder or social communication disorder.

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The VR1882, Autism Service Premium Report, must be submitted each time a deliverable is submitted (such as a report on the achievement of Bundled Job Placement Benchmarks A, B, and C or a report on Job Skills training).

The Autism Premium is paid only after all outcomes have been achieved and approved by the VR counselor for Bundled Job Placement Benchmark C or Supported Employment Benchmarks 1B and/or 6.

### 20.3.3 Outcomes Required for Payment

The services provider is eligible for an Autism Premium when:

* the VR counselor confirms and approves the customer has achieved all outcomes required for the base service, as outlined in the corresponding chapter of the VR-SFP manual; and
* the staff member providing the base service meets both the qualification for the base service and maintains a current Autism Endorsement.

VRS does not pay for fees related to excused or unexcused absences or holidays.

The premium is paid after:

* the documentation required for the base service is approved; and
* the VR counselor approves a complete, accurate, signed, and dated:
  + [VR1882, Autism Service Premium Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html); and
  + invoice.

### 20.3.4 Fee

See the fees listed in the chapter associated with base services.

## 20.4 Criminal Background Premium

### 20.4.1 Service Description

For a customer's case to be eligible for the Criminal Background Premium, VR must have documentation of criminal history in the customer's case file, such as:

* the customer's conditions of probation or parole; or
* a name-based criminal history record or fingerprint record from the Texas Department of Public Safety or equivalent law enforcement agency indicating the customer has a:
  + felony conviction;
  + guilty plea with deferred adjudication for a felony; or
  + no-contest plea with deferred adjudication for a felony.

A provider will not automatically be eligible for the Criminal Background premium when a customer has a felony.

An employment service provider is eligible for the Criminal Background Premium when:

* authorization is indicated on the [VR1845B, Bundled Job Placement Services Plan Part B and Status Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), or on [VR1613B, Supported Employment Service Plan Part 1 - Plan and Benchmark Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html);
* the provider is authorized by a service authorization received at Bundled Job Placement Benchmark A or Supported Employment Benchmark 2; and
* the customer obtains employment that meets all the criteria outlined in VR1845B, Bundled Job Placement Services Plan Part B and Status Report, or on VR1613B, Supported Employment Service Plan Part 1 - Plan and Benchmark Report.

The VR counselor determines whether the type of felony interferes with the customer's ability to obtain competitive integrated employment to meet the goals listed on the customer's individualized plan for employment (IPE), based on consideration of such factors as the:

* type of felony and how long ago the felony was committed;
* customer's job history;
* customer's qualifications; and
* local job market conditions.

The premium is paid only once, at the conclusion and achievement of Bundled Job Placement Benchmark C or Supported Employment Benchmark 6.

To be eligible for payment of the premium, the employment obtained by the customer must meet all the criteria outlined in VR1845B, Bundled Job Placement Services Plan Part B and Status Report, or in VR1613B, Supported Employment Service Plan Part 1 - Plan and Benchmark Report.

### 20.4.2 Process and Procedures

The contracted provider receives authorization for the Criminal Background Premium through a service authorization. The service authorization for the Criminal Background Premium must be received when the service authorization for Bundled Job Placement Benchmark A is received and when Supported Employment Benchmark 2 is received.

The staff member working with the customer must provide the Bundled Job Placement or Supported Employment service as required in the VR-SFP manual.

The provider's staff member must complete the required documentation for either Bundled Job Placement or Supported Employment, including the section for the Criminal Background Premium. The Criminal Background Premium is paid only after all required outcomes for Bundled Job Placement Benchmark C or Supported Employment Benchmark 6 deliverables have been achieved and approved by the VR counselor.

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## 20.5 Deaf Premium

### 20.5.1 Service Description

A service provider is eligible for the Deaf Premium when:

* the customer's primary mode of communication is a form of sign language (such as American Sign Language, Manually Coded English, Signed Exact English, and/or Pidgin Signed English); and
* services are delivered by a staff member qualified to communicate in the customer's primary mode.

To qualify for this premium, the staff member providing direct services must show proof of proficiency in sign language by providing documentation of certification from the Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI), certification from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), or a [Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI)](http://www.rit.edu/ntid/slpi/) rating of intermediate plus.

The Deaf Premium may be available for the services covered in:

* [Chapter 13: Work Readiness Services](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-13);
* [Chapter 17: Basic Employment Services](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-17); and
* [Chapter 18: Supported Employment](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-18).

For interviews and meetings with an employer, the customer may request an interpreter who is not providing the base service by contacting the customer's VR counselor.

### 20.5.2 Process and Procedures

A contracted provider's staff member who provides direct service to the customer must:

* meet the staff qualifications identified for the base service; and
* be certified by the BEI or the RID or hold an SLPI rating of intermediate plus.

The contracted provider receives authorization for the Deaf Premium through a service authorization. The service authorization for the Deaf Premium for:

* Bundled Job Placement must be received when the service authorization for Bundled Job Placement Benchmark A is received;
* Nonbundled Job Placement must be received when the service authorization for the base service is received; and
* Supported Employment:
  + Benchmark 1B must be received when the service authorization for Benchmark 1A is received.

The provider's staff member:

* ensures all outcomes are achieved for the base service; and
* facilitates communication using the customer's primary mode of communication, such as American Sign Language, Manually Coded English, Signed Exact English and/or Pidgin Signed English.

The staff member facilitates communication with or for the customer while:

* providing the base service as defined in the corresponding chapter of the VR-SFP manual; and
* remaining on-site facilitating necessary communication for the customer to participate in the base service.

The provider's staff member must complete the required documentation for the base service, including the section for the Deaf Premium.

### 20.5.3 Outcomes Required for Payment

The services provider is eligible for the Deaf Premium when:

* the VR counselor confirms and approves the customer has achieved all outcomes required for the base service as outlined in the corresponding chapter of the VR-SFP manual; and
* the provider's staff member who facilitates communication attaches the current applicable credential of the staff member's proficiency in sign language.

VRS does not pay fees related to excused or unexcused absences or holidays.

The Deaf Premium is paid when the VR counselor:

* verifies communication was facilitated for the customer; and
* approves a complete, accurate, signed, and dated:
  + report for the base service, with the Deaf Premium section completed; and
  + invoice.

### 20.5.4 Fees

See the fees listed in the chapter associated with base services.

## 20.6 Mileage Premium

This premium is for mileage reimbursement when the provider uses his or her own vehicle to travel to the customer's location to provide services when another provider is not available within 50 miles of the customer's location. This premium does not cover mileage reimbursement when other travel expenses will be reimbursed.

The Mileage Premium may be available to providers serving VR customers receiving the services in the following VR Standards for Providers (VR-SFP) manual chapters:

* [Chapter 4: Employment Assessments](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-04)
* [Chapter 13: Work Readiness Services](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-13)
* [Chapter 14: Work Experience Services](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-14)
* [Chapter 17: Basic Employment Services](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-17)
* [Chapter 18: Supported Employment Services](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-18)
* [Chapter 19: Self Employment](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-19)

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### 20.6.2 Service Description

The Mileage Premium may be available to providers serving VR customers:

* who require an eligible SFP service to achieve the long-term goals as identified on the customer's individualized plan for employment (IPE);
* when there is not a qualified SFP provider available within a 50-mile radius of the location where the authorized service is to be provided; and
* who require the provision of a billable service, excluding travel for the sole purpose of obtaining a customer's signature on required documents.

The Mileage Premium amount is based on direct travel for each mile traveled over 50 miles within a round trip. Travel within the customer's community while providing services to the customer is not allowed to be counted when the Mileage Premium payment is calculated. For example, no mileage is calculated when visiting businesses in the community to apply for jobs and/or visiting another customer in the same community. VR only allows the provider to invoice for one round trip per day.

The VR program does not pay a Mileage Premium:

* to transport customers; or
* if the customer does not show up for a scheduled service (referred to as a "no show").

When a provider serves more than one customer within a round trip, the round-trip mileage is based on the travel to each customer's location served during the round trip. (For example, travel is counted from the provider's location to Odessa to Kermit to Pecos and back to the provider location. Travel within each of these towns would not count.)

Calculate Mileage Premium amount as follows:

1. Determine the round-trip mileage from the provider's location to the service location(s) using MapQuest Route Planner, with shortest distance and round-trip options selected;
2. Subtract 50 miles from the round-trip total; then
3. Multiply the total by the state-approved mileage rate.

Mileage is reimbursed at the approved state automobile mileage rate found on the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts webpage: https://fmx.cpa.texas.gov/fmx/travel/textravel/rates/current.php.

The amount calculated is the Mileage Premium amount paid to the contracted provider if all other conditions are met and the premium is approved in advance with a service authorization. When multiple consumers are seen during a round trip, the cost of the Mileage Premium will be split between all customers.

All State of Texas travel rules for employees must be adhered to by providers.

If a Mileage Premium requirement is listed in the service description, in the process and procedure, or in the outcomes required for payment, need to be changed to meet the individualized needs of a customer a [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) must be completed by the VR counselor and the modification must be approved by the state VR division director before travel.

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## 20.7 Professional Placement Premium

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### 20.7.2 Process and Procedures

The contracted provider receives authorization for the Professional Placement Premium through a service authorization.

The service authorization for the Professional Placement Premium for Job Placement must be received when the service authorization for Job Placement Benchmark A is received. For Supported Employment, the service authorization must be received when the service authorization for Supported Employment Benchmark 2 is received.

The staff member working with the customer must provide the Bundled Job Placement or Supported Employment service as defined in the VR-SFP manual.

The provider's staff member must complete the required documentation for either Bundled Job Placement or Supported Employment, including the section for the Professional Placement Premium. The Professional Placement Premium is paid only after all outcomes have been achieved and approved by the VR counselor for Bundled Job Placement Benchmark C or Supported Employment Benchmark 6.

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## 20.8 Wage Premium

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### 20.8.2 Process and Procedures

The contracted provider receives authorization for the Wage Premium through a service authorization. The service authorization for the Wage Placement Premium for Job Placement must be received when the service authorization for Job Placement Benchmark A is received. For Supported Employment, the service authorization must be received when the service authorization for Supported Employment Benchmark 2 is received.

The staff member working with the customer must provide the Bundled Job Placement or Supported Employment service as defined in the VR-SFP manual. The provider's staff member must complete the required documentation for either Bundled Job Placement or Supported Employment, including the section for the Wage Premium.

The Wage Premium is paid only after all outcomes have been achieved and approved by the VR counselor for Bundled Job Placement Benchmark C or Supported Employment Benchmark 6.

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## 20.9 Premium Fee Chart

A provider cannot collect money from a VR customer or the customer's family for any service-related charge that exceeds VR's allowable service fees. If VR and another resource are paying for a service for a customer, the total payment must not exceed the fee specified in the VR Standards for Providers.

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### 20.9.3 Deaf Premium

| Deaf Premium | Unit Rate |
| --- | --- |
| Non-Bundled Employment Data Sheet, Application, and Résumé Training | $177.00 |
| Non-Bundled Interview Training | $142.00 |
| Bundled Job Placement (Basic) Benchmark C | $1,065.00 |
| Bundled Job Placement (Enhanced) Benchmark C | $1,420.00 |
| Supported Employment Benchmark 1B | $533.00 |
| Supported Employment Benchmark 6 | $3,550.00 |
| Job Skills Training (Individual) | $17.75 per hour |
| Job Skills Training (Group) | $8.50 per hour |
| VAT-Job Search Training | $390.00 |
| VAT-Disability Disclosure | $390.00 |
| VAT-Entering the World of Work | $195.00 |
| VAT-Explore the You in Work | $195.00 |
| VAT-Money Smart | $585.00 |
| VAT-Public Transportation Training (Group) | $8.50 per hour |
| VAT-Public Transportation Training (Individual) | $17.75 per hour |
| VAT-Soft Skills for Work Success | $292.50 |
| VAT-Soft Skills to Pay the Bills—Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success | $390.00 |

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## 20.10 Travel Premium

This Travel Premium allows contracted providers to be reimbursed for mileage and other travel-related costs, such as lodging, food, and third-party transportation. When only mileage travel is being submitted, manager approval is not required. For all other travel expenses, VR manager approval is required before the travel occurs.

The Travel Premium may be available to contracted providers serving VR customers who receive the services described in

* VR-SFP chapters:
  + Chapter 5: Orientation and Mobility Services
  + Chapter 7: Diabetes Self-Management Education Services
  + Chapter 9: Assistive Technology for Sight-Related Disabilities
  + Chapter 10: Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind (IL-OIB)
* [Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual (VRSM) B-403-3: Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation System](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-400#b403-3).

### 20.10.1 Definitions

#### Provider Location

The provider's location is defined as the provider's headquarters, as stated in the provider's contract, or the location of the provider's staff that is providing the service, whichever is closest to the location where the service will be provided.

#### Round Trip

A trip where the starting point and destination are the same (for example, start and end at the provider's location).

### 20.10.2 Service Description

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#### 20.10.2.1 Mileage Only

When considering the cost of personal vehicle travel (mileage) as a transportation alternative, the VR provider considers all related costs, such as the cost of meals, parking, vehicle rental, fuel, or taxi.

VR Manager approval is not required for the provider to be reimbursed for mileage only.

The mileage reimbursement is based on direct travel for each mile traveled over 50 miles within a round trip.

Before traveling, the provider must receive a service authorization from VR that includes the anticipated distance and the number of trips to be traveled.

After traveling, the provider must submit [VR3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan and Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) with all sections related to the mileage reimbursement completed.

To calculate mileage-only amount of the Travel Premium:

1. Determine the round-trip mileage from the provider's location to the service location(s) (can include travel within the customer's community) using MapQuest Route Planner with shortest distance and round-trip options selected
2. Subtract 50 miles from the round-trip total; and
3. Multiply the total by the state-approved mileage rate

Example:

* The provider is located in Lubbock.
* The customer lives in Amarillo (126 miles from Lubbock).
* The provider traveled a total of five (5) miles within Amarillo to provide services at several locations. (e.g. Walmart to United Grocery store for a total of 5 miles),
* The provider returns to Lubbock (126 miles).
* The mileage reimbursement is calculated as follows:

126 + 5 + 126 = 257

257 – 50 = 207 miles

207 x (state-approved mileage rate) will equal the mileage reimbursement.

Mileage is reimbursed at the approved state automobile mileage rate found on the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts webpage: https://fmx.cpa.texas.gov/fmx/travel/textravel/rates/current.php.

#### 20.10.2.2 Other Travel Cost (Excluding Mileage)

To be reimbursed for any other travel costs (excluding mileage) such as meals, lodging, and transportation, the provider must submit a [VR3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan and Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), which includes the projected cost of travel for each customer to be served during the trip. The VR counselor and VR Manager review the projected cost on the VR3436 and supporting documentation. When the VR Manager approves projected cost of travel on the VR3436, then a service authorization is received by the provider to authorize travel cost. The service authorization must be received before the travel occurs.

When applicable, the provider must use the guidelines below, when completing the VR3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan and Report. Copies of all receipts for all costs, excluding mileage, must be submitted with the invoice.

##### **Lodging**

The cost of lodging is reimbursed only if it is incurred at a commercial lodging establishment.

The provider should use the least expensive lodging available. The provider cannot exceed the rates allowed on the published US General Services Administration’s (GSA) Federal Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rates website. If the city is not listed but the county is listed, use the daily rate of the county found on the [GSA Federal Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rates website](file:///C:\\Users\\wood3843\\AppData\\Local\\Microsoft\\Windows\\INetCache\\Content.Outlook\\BLH84MUD\\GSA%20Federal%20Domestic%20Maximum%20Per%20Diem%20Rates%20website).

Reimbursement includes:

* the cost of the room;
* city, county, state and other hotel taxes; and
* fee for self-parking when applicable.

##### **Meals**

Meals are only reimbursed if:

* the provider is away from the identified provider location for at least six consecutive hours, and
* overnight travel is required for the trip.

Receipts are required for meals to be reimbursed.

Gratuities are not reimbursed. Taxes are reimbursed but are already included in the allowed per diem rate. Alcohol expenses are not reimbursed.

To determine the per diem rate, refer to the [Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rates](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem) published by the GSA. If the appropriate city is not listed, but the county is listed, the VR counselor uses the daily rate for the county

##### **Air Transportation**

Airfare can be purchased to meet a provider's transportation needs only if:

* airfare is the most cost-effective method (flying versus driving);
* airfare is an appropriate means of transportation for the provider based on potential disability-related factors; or
* no reasonable alternative exists.

When considering the cost of airfare as a transportation alternative, the VR provider considers all related costs, such as the cost of transportation to and from the airport, parking, vehicle rental, fuel, or taxi. The VR provider documents the cost comparison clearly, including supporting documentation and submits this as an addendum to the [VR3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan and Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html). A brief justification for the need for air transportation must be included on the VR3436.

For a provider to be reimbursed for commercial air transportation expenses, a copy of a complete passenger receipt issued by a commercial airline company or an itinerary issued by the company or a travel agency is required.

The commercial air transportation expense receipt or itinerary must include the following:

* name of the provider and airline
* ticket number
* class of transportation
* travel dates
* amount of the airfare
* origin and destination of each flight
* proof of payment

The provider should select the most cost-effective airfare available between the airport closest to the identified provider location and the city where services will be provided.

##### **Ground Transportation**

A provider may be reimbursed for the actual cost of transportation by taxi, bus, other form of mass transit, form a network transportation driver (for example, Uber or Lyft), if needed for the provider to travel to the location where the service will be provided.

* The most cost-effective mode of transportation available must be used
* Receipts for all travel-related expenses must be provided.

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