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

Revised December 17, 2018

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## B-504: Content of the IPE

The IPE must contain:

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

When appropriate, the IPE also includes:

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

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

### B-504-1: Employment Goal

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Employment Goal Resources

Information about in-demand occupations and other workforce data is available from TWS regarding Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI).

Detailed descriptions of occupations, information about industry categories, and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) is available from O\*NET.

### B-504-2: Education Goal

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

The education goals to choose from in RHW include:

* + Attain a secondary school diploma;
  + Attain a secondary school equivalency;
  + Attain certificate of attendance/completion; successfully completed IEP;
  + Complete one or more years of postsecondary education;
  + Attain a non-degree postsecondary certification, license, or educational certificate;
  + Attain an Associate Degree;
  + Attain a Bachelor Degree;
  + Attain a Master’s Degree;
  + Attain a PhD; and
  + Not applicable.

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

### B-504-3: Intermediate Objectives

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

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

In creating intermediate objectives:

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

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

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

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

**B-504-5: Planned Services**

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

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

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

#### Types of Services

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

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

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

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

#### Counseling and Guidance

Counseling and guidance must be included on every IPE as a planned service. For more information, refer to [C-100: Counseling and Guidance](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-c-100).

#### Substantial Goods and Services

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

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

All substantial goods and services must be included on the customer's IPE. Any change to or addition of a substantial good or service must be documented in an IPE amendment. For more information on IPE amendments, refer to [B-505-2: IPE Amendment](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-500#b505-2).

#### Ancillary Goods and Services

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

Anticipated ancillary services, such as those that are included on the [VR3110, Surgery and Treatment Recommendation](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) form, must be included on the customer's IPE. If there is a change to the ancillary services after the IPE has been completed, but the substantial services, such as the physician and facility, remain the same, then a service justification case note can be used to document this change; an IPE amendment is not required.

For more information refer to [D-202-1: Documentation Requirements](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d202-1) and [E-300: Case Notes Requirements](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-500#masthead).

If, during the provision of planned services, unanticipated ancillary services are necessary to complete the service, refer to [D-204-3: After-the-Fact Ancillary Service Authorizations](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d204-3) for required processes and procedures.

#### Supportive Goods and Services

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

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

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

Examples of supportive goods or services may include interpreter services, unplanned supplies, tutors, or other supplemental services. For more information on supplemental goods and services, refer to [C-1400: Supplemental Services](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-c-1400).

#### Providers

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

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

If the customer has a service provider that the customer wishes to use, it is VR staff responsibility to determine whether that provider meets the standards and will accept TWC-VR fee schedules. See the [VR Standards for Providers Manual](https://twc.texas.gov/partners/vocational-rehabilitation-standards-providers-manual).

If the preferred provider is not set up in ReHabWorks, refer to [D-211: Setting Up and Paying Providers](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d211) for information about setting up providers. The provider must be set up in RHW before they can be included on the customer's IPE.

#### Services Based on Level of Significance

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

* include in the IPE any needed interventions for each functional capacity area that is identified as seriously limited;
* verify that VR will be providing at least one substantial service in addition to counseling and guidance, and any assessment services necessary to develop the IPE; and
* verify that planned services are expected to extend beyond six months from the time the IPE is signed. (This must be reflected in the start and end dates of services on the IPE).

For more information about level of significance, see [B-309: Establishing the Level of Significance](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-300#b309).

#### Dates of Service

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

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

For each service:

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

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

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

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

#### Payment Method

The IPE includes the payment method for each service. The payment method depends on whether there is a cost for a good or service and include arranged, provided, and purchased. For specific descriptions of each type of payment method, refer to the [VR Glossary](https://twc.texas.gov/files/jobseekers/vr-services-manual-glossary-twc.pdf) and the [ReHabWorks Users Guide, Chapter 16: Case Service Record](http://online.dars.txnet.state.tx.us/prd/services/rhwhelp/ch16.htm).

#### Service Records

A service record and a service authorization must be created in RHW for each purchased service that is included on the customer's IPE. Refer to [D-204: The Purchasing Process](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200" \l "d204) for additional information about authorizing the purchase of a good or service with a service authorization.

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

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

Do not create service records for:

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

For additional information, refer to the [ReHabWorks Users Guide, Chapter 16: Case Service Record](http://online.dars.txnet.state.tx.us/prd/services/rhwhelp/ch16.htm).

### B-504-6: Comparable Benefits

Information about available comparable benefits and services must be included on the customer's IPE. This includes any comparable services and benefits that the customer has or has agreed to seek. Clearly describe the customer's responsibility to apply for and maintain eligibility for comparable benefits, such as Pell grants. For more information, refer to [D-203-3: Use of Comparable Benefits](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d203-3).

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

Information about the customer's participation in the cost of services must be included on the customer's IPE.  For more information, refer to [D-203-4: Customer Participation in the Cost of Services](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d203-4).

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

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

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

"Apply for financial aid."

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

"Apply for the Pell grant each semester."

#### VR Responsibilities

VR staff are responsible for ensuring compliance with published policies and procedures throughout the VR process. For more information about roles and responsibilities of VR staff throughout the VR process, see [B-100: Vocational Rehabilitation Process, Roles, and Responsibilities](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-100).

#### Customer Responsibilities

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

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

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

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

For more information about role and responsibilities of the customer throughout the VR process, see [B-101-1: Customer](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-100#b101-1).

#### Purchasing Decisions

The VR counselor must explain TWC-VR informed choice, best value purchasing, required use of available comparable benefits, and customer participation in the cost of services to the customer and the impact they may have on selection of goods and services necessary to achieve the employment goal. See [D-203: Purchasing Decisions](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d203) for more information.

### B-504-9: Frequency of Contact

Contact with a VR customer can include direct face-to-face communication, phone calls, written correspondence, and electronic communications, such as email. All communications with customers must be confidential and secure. For instructions on encrypting electronic communications, see [Instructions for Encrypting Files](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/its/html/iris_security_notes.html).

Note: Text messaging, even from an agency device, is not a secure means of communication. VR staff must not communicate with VR customers through non-secure means. VR staff must comply with all policies and procedures in the [TWC Privacy Manual (PDF)](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/gc/docs/privacy-manual.pdf).

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

The minimum FOC with the customer should be clearly stated on the customer's IPE. However, this FOC can increase as needed throughout the life of the case without requiring a change to the IPE. For example, if the FOC on the IPE is identified as "60 days," but the customer has a need for weekly contact while he or she is establishing accommodations for a new college semester, then the FOC for that period can be weekly, but the IPE does not need to be changed since this is within the minimum 60-day threshold on the IPE.

Counseling and guidance (provided only by a VR counselor) does meet the definition of a contact for the purpose of meeting the FOC requirement. However, substantive customer contact may be made by a VR counselor, Rehabilitation Assistant, or other VR staff members, and occurs as often as necessary. Each of these contacts will count towards meeting the required FOC that is identified on the IPE.

### B-504-10: Signatures

A valid IPE must be signed by the VR customer or, as appropriate, the customer's representative, and approved and signed by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor employed by TWC-VR.

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

Note: In addition to being included on the customer's IPE, purchased services must also be authorized in advance with a service authorization that is generated by RHW. For more information about required purchasing processes and procedures, refer to [D-200: Purchasing Goods and Services](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200).

#### Customer or Representative Signatures

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

When the IPE is not available in RHW, print the [VR5163, Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), and:

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

For more information about PINs, see the [ReHabWorks User Guide, Chapter 8: PINs](http://online.dars.txnet.state.tx.us/prd/services/rhwhelp/ch8.htm).

#### VR Counselor Signature

The VR counselor reviews and approves the IPE after considering:

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

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

If, after discussing the concerns with the proposed IPE, the customer and the VR counselor cannot come to an agreement on the content of the IPE, the VR counselor informs the customer of his or her rights, as outlined in the "Can We Talk" brochure. The VR counselor documents the status of the pending IPE and notifies the VR Supervisor.  If needed, an Extension of Time for completing the IPE may be necessary.  Refer to [B-503-1: Extension of Time for IPE](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-500#b503-1) for more information.

### B-504-11: IPE Documentation Requirements

The content that is included in the customer’s IPE is documented in the comprehensive assessment case note. Refer to [E-300: Case Notes Requirements](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-500#masthead) for additional information.