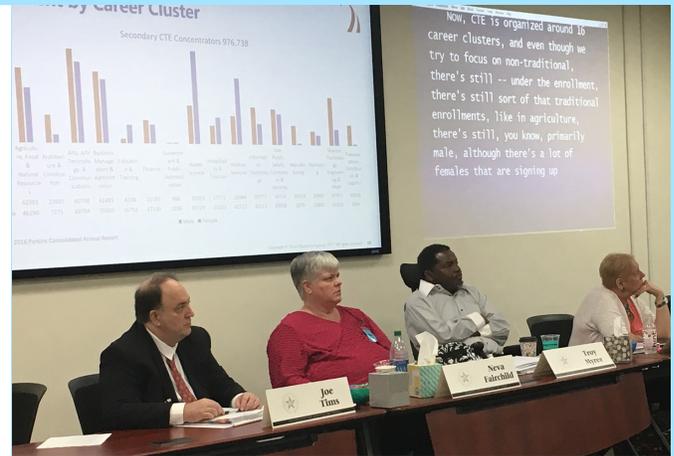




# Rehabilitation Council of Texas

## 2017 ANNUAL REPORT





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## Legislative Notice:

Legislation authorized during the 84th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2015) transferred vocational rehabilitation services from the former Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

Under TWC, vocational rehabilitation services are referred to as Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

### **Learn more at:**

[texasworkforce.org/news/departments-assistive-rehabilitative-services-program-transition](http://texasworkforce.org/news/departments-assistive-rehabilitative-services-program-transition).



## Message from the Council Chair

On behalf of the Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT), I am pleased to share the 2017 RCT Annual Report with the State of Texas. The report reviews the work of the Council including the activities and accomplishments the RCT, Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS), and Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) have made possible through its working partnership. We share a commitment to bring diverse perspectives, leadership, and innovation to enhance the vocational rehabilitation (VR) delivery system to increase competitive, integrated employment and independence in the lives of Texans with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities.

As directed by the 84th Texas Legislature, the general and blind services components were successfully transitioned into one division with one set of policies and procedures and one management on October 1, 2017. This result and other accomplishments described in this report could not be obtained without the intense collaboration and dedication among the members of the RCT and the staffs of TWS-VRS and TWC. I cannot give enough praise due to these governor-appointed volunteers and state employees who created and implemented this massive change while ensuring uninterrupted VR services for Texans receiving these services or who wish to apply for them.

The highlight of the report are the stories of Texans with disabilities who successfully prepared for, obtain, and retain integrated competitive employment and achieve greater independence and social participation in their communities. The RCT and TWS-VRS continue to make even more successes possible for the future by expanding VR services to meet the needs of Texans with disabilities including youth and students with disabilities.

The RCT will continue to be guided by its mission to advocate for Texans with disabilities to help them achieve employment.

Martha Garber  
Chair

## Message from the Commissioners



**Andres Alcantar**

TWC Chairman and Commissioner  
Representing the Public



**Ruth R. Hughs**

TWC Commissioner  
Representing Employers



**Julian Alvarez**

TWC Commissioner  
Representing Labor

A little over a year ago, vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs and staff transitioned to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). Since then, TWC worked to ensure a smooth transition of VR services and enhance our VR operations, with significant support from the Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT). In Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, TWC provided services to more than 100,000 VR customers and more than 15,000 VR customers achieved successful employment outcomes. In addition, TWC continued its commitment to connect Texans with disabilities with opportunities to contribute their significant skills and abilities to the workforce of Texas.

TWC also partnered with the Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities and Texas Workforce Solutions board partners for the second year of the Texas HireAbility campaign, a statewide effort to raise awareness about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities and highlighting the contributions of these individuals in the workforce. The campaign coincides with October Disability Employment Awareness Month and features hiring and disability awareness events across the state, as well as online resources for Texas employers.

TWC has worked with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Education Agency on a Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative to support education and workforce goals across the state, which includes a focus on helping students with disabilities reach their employment goals. In support of a Tri-Agency goal of expanding career exploration and employment opportunities to Texas youth with disabilities, TWC launched the Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) work-based learning program in FY 2017 with all 28 local workforce development boards and their employer partners throughout the state. More than 1,500 students with disabilities received paid work experience and work readiness training through SEAL.

After we completed the successful transition of the VR programs to TWC without interruption in services to customers, we immediately began work to combine the two VR divisions as directed by the 84th Texas Legislature. On October 1, 2017, the TWC Division for Rehabilitation Services and the Division for Blind Services were combined into one designated state unit, the Vocational Rehabilitation Division. The structure of the new, combined VR division will streamline and strengthen our operations, ultimately helping us achieve better outcomes for our customers.

We're also continuing to integrate Workforce Solutions offices around the state with VR offices to improve access and services to help Texans reach their employment and career goals.

As this year draws to a close, we wish to express our deep gratitude to the members of the RCT for participating in the five stakeholder meetings that helped to lay the groundwork for combining the formerly separate divisions. In addition, the council worked tirelessly this year to make important recommendations that helped us effectively combine and improve our existing VR policies and procedures.

Our partnership with RCT is critical to the success of the VR program. As our relationship with the council grows, we will continue to listen to RCT's invaluable input and work together to provide quality services to our customers, so Texans with disabilities can continue to achieve their employment goals.

Handwritten signature of Andres Alcantar in blue ink.

Handwritten signature of Ruth R. Hughs in blue ink.

Handwritten signature of Julian Alvarez in blue ink.



## *About the Council*

### Mission, Values and Responsibilities

The Rehabilitation Council of Texas advises the state's designated vocational rehabilitation programs on policy, scope and effectiveness of services. The Council is federally mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1992.

The Council helps ensure that Texans with disabilities have access to effective vocational rehabilitation services, which result in competitive integrated employment, greater independence and community participation. The Council is governed by bylaws designed to support this goal.

Members are appointed by the Texas governor for three-year terms and are selected to represent a diverse range of disabilities and community perspectives. They are charged with being the "voice" of service recipients.

The Council participates in the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils to promote a nationally consistent vision for vocational rehabilitation priorities, goals and outcomes.

### **Learn more by visiting**

[texasworkforce.org/agency/rehabilitation-council-texas](https://texasworkforce.org/agency/rehabilitation-council-texas)



Commissioner Julian Alvarez presents certificates to retiring members Commissioner Alvarez, Joe Tims, Martha Garber, Joyce Delores Taylor, Cheryl Fuller.

## Mission

The Council's mission is to partner with the state vocational rehabilitation programs to advocate for Texans with disabilities in the vocational rehabilitation process.

## Values

- The worth and dignity of each individual
- The right to choice, which is realized by access to full information
- Work opportunities that open doors to individual independence and participation in community life
- Person-centered goals, service plans and delivery systems leading to individual success
- Shared roles and responsibilities to improve consumer satisfaction with the rehabilitation process and outcomes
- Collaboration and partnership with federal, state and private agencies for system improvement

## Responsibilities

- Review, analyze and advise the state vocational rehabilitation programs on performance, effectiveness, consumer satisfaction, responsibilities, functions and eligibility, including the need for order of selection.
- Submit reports of progress of the vocational rehabilitation program to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) commissioner.
- Help prepare the State Plan for the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and develop a description of the Council's input and recommendations as a part of the plan.
- Review and analyze the vocational rehabilitation program effectiveness, including an assessment of the consumer satisfaction and the vocational rehabilitation needs of Texans with disabilities.
- Submit an annual report that highlights vocational rehabilitation services goals, achievements and statistics to the Texas governor and RSA commissioner.
- Coordinate working relationships between the state vocational rehabilitation program, State Independent Living Council (SILC) and centers for independent living in Texas.
- Coordinate activities with other councils to avoid duplication of efforts and increase the number of individuals served.

## Spotlight: About Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Vocational rehabilitation services help Texas adults and students with disabilities prepare for, find, keep or advance in employment or successfully transition from high school to education and employment opportunities.

The goal of services is competitive integrated employment, which is employment in jobs with work settings, wages, benefits and advancement opportunities equivalent to jobs held by people without disabilities.

To be eligible for services, Texans must have one or more disabilities that result in substantial barriers to employment and must be able to benefit from services. Visual disabilities served include significant visual impairments, blindness and deafblindness. Other disabilities served include behavioral and mental health conditions; hearing impairments; alcohol or drug addiction; intellectual, learning and developmental disabilities and physical disabilities.

Services are provided based on each person's needs. Services may include vocational counseling and guidance; education and training to get the skills needed for a chosen career; assistive devices such as hearing aids, screen readers, wheelchairs and prosthetics; vehicle and home modifications and training in key areas such as reading and writing Braille, using a white cane to navigate and using assistive technologies.

Services are also available to help employers successfully recruit, hire and retain qualified Texans with disabilities.

**Learn more by visiting** [texasworkforce.org/jobseekers/vocational-rehabilitation-services](https://texasworkforce.org/jobseekers/vocational-rehabilitation-services)

## Committees

The following committees are responsible for upholding the mission, values and responsibilities of the Council in partnership with representatives from the state vocational rehabilitation programs.

### Executive Committee

Committee Chair: Martha Garber, M.Ed., LPC-S, LMFT *Composed of chair, vice chair, and all committee chairs*

Coordinates with state vocational rehabilitation programs leadership, develops quarterly meeting agendas, develops public outreach materials and reviews the Council's budget, bylaws and amendments.

### Consumer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment Committee

Committee Chair: Joe Tims

Reviews consumer satisfaction survey results and other program data, addresses service concerns and helps steer a statewide needs assessment every three years.

### Planning and Review Committee

Committee Chair: Rene Gonzalez, Ph.D.

Helps set and evaluate progress toward goals and priorities for the Combined State Plan for the Vocational Rehabilitation Programs, recommends ways to improve vocational rehabilitation services and receives public comment.

### Membership and Education Committee

Committee Chair: Susie May

Educates Council members about federal and state legislation and how to best represent the interests of Texans with disabilities, recruits new members and plans and oversees new member onboarding activities.

### Policy, Procedure and Personnel Development Committee

Committee Chair: Karen Stanfill

Comments on changes to vocational rehabilitation policy, reviews appeals decisions and monitors procedural changes, staffing and impartial hearing officer selection.

# Our Work 2017 Year in Review

All three Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Commissioners — Chairman and Commissioner Representing the Public Andres Alcantar, Commissioner Representing Employers Ruth R. Hughs, and Commissioner Representing Labor Julia Alvarez — attended the first meeting of the Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT) in fiscal year 2017. We were honored and have witnessed a strong commitment to the success of the RCT and vocational rehabilitation (VR) services from TWC. Discussion items at each RCT meeting include the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), VR Policies, the TWC VR Customer Satisfaction Survey, Standards of Performance, and the VR portion of the Combined State Plan.

TWC was charged with combining its two VR units (the Division for Rehabilitation Services and the Division for Blind Services) into one designated state unit by October 1, 2017. This combination required many changes to VR policies. The RCT held weekly conference calls with the VR policy team to discuss combining policies and procedures. The RCT made recommendations, helping the VR policy team to thoughtfully create policy that staff will follow as they provide VR services to Texans with disabilities.

With the move of VR services to TWC in 2016 and the combining of the two VR units in 2017, there has been extensive regional reorganization and office moves of VR staff. As a result, the RCT will continue to review, analyze and advise on all aspects of the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in Texas.

Additionally, a literature review was conducted by the RCT and presented to the VR Director of TWC regarding the importance for a vocational rehabilitation counselor to possess or obtain a master's degree. TWC continues to include this requirement in job postings and to recognize the importance of having qualified staff.

The Combined State Plan was another important project in 2016 the RCT was involved in. Under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each state must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) that outlines a four-year workforce development strategy. The publicly funded workforce system is a national network of federal, state, regional, and local agencies and organizations that provide a range of employment, education, training, and related services to help job seekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. States must have approved Unified or Combined State Plans in place to receive federal funding for core programs. There were many modifications to the Texas Combined State Plan to review. The final plan was approved on September 22, 2017, and sent to the RSA.



McAllen TX Joyce Delores Taylor and Dr. Rene Gonzalez



San Antonio TX Paul Hunt and Martha Garber



El Paso TX JoAnne Fluke and Martha Garber



Dallas TX Interpreter, Matt Berend and Neva Fairchild

Neva Fairchild, our Community Rehabilitation Program Representative, and Karen Stanfill, our Client Assistance Program Representative, attended conferences held by the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation in the fall of 2016; later Martha Garber, RCT Chair, attended the conferences in the spring of 2017. These conferences are held twice a year and are attended by a member of the RCT, the VR director and senior staff from TWC. The conferences provide an opportunity for members of state rehabilitation councils and VR directors to learn about and participate in discussions on changes in the law, programming, structure, and reporting requirements, among other important topics, for VR agencies.

In July 2017, members of the RCT hosted Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) Town Hall Meetings across the state. Two meeting times were offered at each location to offer an option for participation during or after work hours. The meetings were conducted in McAllen, San Antonio, Houston, El Paso and Dallas. The RCT discussed the findings from the meetings with program staff from TWC. The RCT will finalize a report in early 2018, and we are looking forward to working with the VR program to find better ways to meet the needs of VR customers.

Adam Leonard, TWC Director of Operational Insight, has presented at each Quarterly Meeting this year. Mr. Leonard provided the RCT with detailed information from detailed presentation topics such as: Performance Accountability and What It Means for VR; VR Performance, Evaluation and Reporting; and Operational Insights. We look forward to Mr. Leonard’s presentations at meetings in the future.

Diane Salazar, Director of Career and Technology Education (CTE), Texas Education Agency (TEA), was invited to give a presentation on CTE. Her presentation provided RCT with information regarding regular academic courses combined with career-focused courses for high school students to help build their skills, increase their work opportunities and prepare them for college. Tammy Percy, Assistant Director of Special Education, Division of Student Populations of TEA, also provided a presentation on TEA’s new organizational chart. TEA is an important partner for VR as the WIOA is implemented in Texas.



RCT Meeting Joyce Delores Taylor, Vice Chair and Martha Garber, Chair

## Input and Recommendations

The Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT), which is the state rehabilitation council for Texas, met quarterly with Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), the state-designated vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency, and members of its Vocational Rehabilitation Division (VRD). During these meetings, TWC and VRD representatives provided updates on vocational rehabilitation programs and the RCT provided input and made recommendations regarding the combining of the two designated state units as well as other VR services program matters.

The RCT uses a committee structure to provide focused review and comment to VRD. These committees are: the executive committee; the program planning and review committee which is comprised of all RCT members; the policy, procedures and personnel development committee; the consumer satisfaction and needs assessment committee; and the membership and education committee. Much of the interaction included exchanges of information to achieve greater clarity and understanding of the transition of VR programs and services from the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) to TWC. While the detail work is done in the committee structure, all comments and recommendations are made from the full RCT.

The following is a summary of the input and recommendations made regarding the transition and successfully merging the two VR designated state units (DSUs) now within TWC — Blind Services Division and Rehabilitation Services Division — into one DSU.

**Recommendation:** With regard to the evaluation of progress toward meeting VR and supported employment goals, the RCT recommends additional collaboration with the VRD to increase the level of analysis of impediments and create strategies to address shortfalls.

**Response:** VRD welcomes additional opportunities for collaboration with RCT.

**Recommendation:** With regard to state goals and priorities, the RCT recommends more specific language about “increased coordination,” such as: specific entities on which coordination efforts will focus, how coordination will be accomplished, and the results desired from increased coordination.

**Response:** Following consultation with RCT, TWC adopted the final goals on December 20, 2016. VRD agrees that it is important to include specific strategies for increased coordination in the plan, and believes that is addressed in other parts of the VR plan.

**Recommendation:** With regard to transition services to students, the VRD is proposing to increase the transition age for students who are blind or visually impaired from age 10 to 14 and lower the age for students with all other disabilities to age 14. The RCT is concerned about the group of blind and visually impaired customers who are between age 10 and 14 when this change is implemented. The RCT recommends that VRD work closely with Blind Children’s Services



RCT Meeting Paul Hunt, Casey Hertel, Rene Gonzalez



Matt Berend and Crystal Stark during the RCT May Meeting.



Mr. Paul Hunt uses his braille keyboard to review documents and take notes during the RCT Meeting.

and education officials to insure the needs of these students are met, and that close relationships between Blind Children’s Services and VRD staff are maintained to insure a smooth transition when students reach age 14.

**Response:** TWC’s three-member Commission (Commission) adopted a grandfather provision for all students between the ages of 10 to 13 who are currently receiving services through the Blind Services Division’s VR program. Establishing such a provision will ensure that services to children are not disrupted. VRD agrees that collaboration with Blind Children’s Services and the education system is essential to ensure a smooth transition for students younger than age 14 who have visual impairments.

**Recommendation:** With regard to coordination with education officials, the RCT recommends that VRD add language to define the school district’s role in providing Pre-Employment Transition Services.

**Response:** The school district’s role in providing Pre-Employment Transition Services is defined in the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between TWC and the Texas Education Agency (TEA), as referenced in the Coordination with Education Officials section of the modified VR plan.

**Recommendation:** With regard to Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD), the RCT is concerned that ethnic and disability representation percentages of VRD staff does not reflect the population of the state. The RCT recommends a focus on recruiting and hiring ethnically diverse individuals, as well as those with disabilities, to better represent the population of Texas.

**Response:** This recommendation has been added to the CSPD content area.

**Recommendation:** With regard to the job application process for VR staff, the RCT recommends increased distribution of job postings to attract a more diverse and qualified applicant pool.

**Response:** This recommendation has been added to the CSPD content area. VRD management and the TWC’s Human Resources Department are also working together to identify additional strategies to attract qualified candidates.

**Recommendation:** To gain a more diverse applicant pool for VR staff positions, the RCT recommends an increased effort to resolve usability and accessibility issues within the TWC application system.

**Response:** TWC is committed to full accessibility of the WorkInTexas.com application and has taken proactive measures to resolve concerns as they arose, including engaging subject matter experts and assistive technology users to test the system and provide feedback on enhancements.

**Recommendation:** The RCT strongly supports the maintenance of current CSPD standards for qualified VR counselors to be consistent with the national certification for certified rehabilitation counselors.

**Response:** VRD is committed to continued consultation with RCT regarding the effectiveness of the current Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (QVRC) standard and the development of additional strategies, as needed, to ensure that Texas recruits, trains, and retains the most qualified individuals for VR counselor positions.

**Recommendation:** The RCT recommends the maintenance of the vocational rehabilitation career ladder as an incentive to retain a highly qualified counseling staff.

**Response:** VRD is committed to continued consultation with RCT regarding the VR career ladder to ensure its effectiveness in retaining highly qualified counselors.

**Recommendation:** The RCT recommends maintaining a strong training system to sustain VR staff expertise to meet the needs of VR consumers as well as meet the requirements of CSPD, including training for specialized caseloads such as intensive training for direct service providers of blind services and regional training staff that can address local VR staff training needs.

**Response:** VRD agrees that training in the area of specialized caseloads, such as those for blindness and visual impairments, is necessary to provide quality services to VR customers. A variety of training options are available to field staff including regional and unit training conducted by local VR staff. As the combined division is implemented, VRD will review available training and make improvements and additions as needed to ensure relevant, effective and timely training for staff.

**Recommendation:** With regard to the timing of matters submitted to the RCT for review, the RCT recommends that information be received in a timely way



Susie May, RCT Education & Membership Committee Chair, presents the committee report. Others in picture Jim Brocato, Joyce Delores Taylor and Martha Garber.

with adequate time for review in order that the members of the Council can thoughtfully craft meaningful responses.

**Response:** VRD acknowledges that some of the content submitted to RCT for the modified VR portion of the state plan was provided with a request for feedback on short turnaround. This was due to the assertive timeline for development and submission of the combined VR portions of the state plan. VRD will provide additional time for RCT review of future plan modifications to the greatest degree possible. With regard to RCT input on policy changes, VRD has developed and shared with RCT a timetable for VR policy changes that affords RCT opportunities to comment in writing and during weekly teleconferences with VR policy staff.

**Recommendation:** The RCT recommends that when using the acronyms within documents VRD be mindful to refer to who has the responsibility, the DSA or the DSU, to reduce the possibility of confusion.

**Response:** Changes to acronyms referenced throughout the report have been made as necessary.

**Recommendation:** The RCT strongly recommends that while combining the two DSU's, specialized services for customers who are blind or visually impaired be maintained and considered for other disability specific populations consistent with the demands of customers who have complex needs.

**Response:** VRD is committed to preserving specialized services for customers who are blind or visually impaired, as well as for customers with other disability-specific needs.



TWCVR Employees, Geoffrey Miller and Corey Turner present the CSNA report to the RCT. Others in picture Cheryl Fuller.

# Measures of Success

## Customer Satisfaction Survey

The following survey results describe satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services provided by the former Texas Workforce Commission in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2017. Surveys were completed by consumers with an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) whose cases were closed as either successful (employed) or unsuccessful (not employed) the month prior to the survey.

Percentages indicate consumers who were either satisfied or very satisfied and do not include data for survey responders who chose not to answer the question.

## Customer Satisfaction Survey Result: Other Disabilities

*Other disabilities include behavioral and mental health conditions; hearing impairments, including deafness; alcohol or drug addiction; intellectual, learning and developmental disabilities and physical disabilities, including traumatic brain and spinal cord injury, back injury, paralysis and impaired movement.*

I was treated in a friendly, caring and respectful manner when I dealt with staff .....	94.4%
I had input in setting my employment goals.....	89.4%
I had input in planning the services I received.....	87.3%
I am satisfied with my counselor .....	87.2%
I am satisfied with my overall experience .....	87.8%

## Customer Satisfaction Survey Results: Visual Disabilities

*Visual disabilities include blindness, significant visual impairments and deafblindness.*

I was treated in a friendly, caring and respectful manner when I dealt with staff .....	94.9%
I had input in setting my employment goals.....	91.0%
I had input in planning the services I received .....	90.5%
I am satisfied with my counselor .....	87.5%
I am satisfied with my overall experience .....	89.7%

## Statistics: Other Disabilities

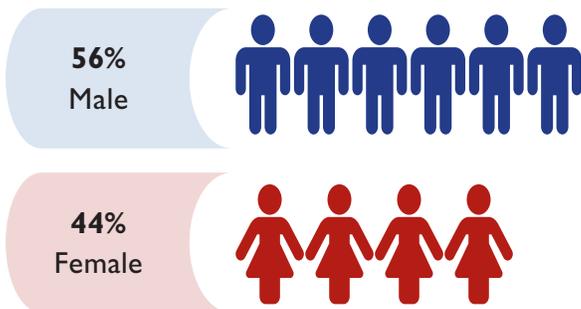
The following statistics describe vocational rehabilitation services for persons with general disabilities provided in SFY 2017 by the Texas Workforce Commission. For age-related data, age reported at the start of the fiscal year was used.

Other disabilities include behavioral and mental health conditions; hearing impairments, including deafness; alcohol or drug addiction; intellectual, learning and developmental disabilities and physical disabilities, including traumatic brain and spinal cord injury, back injury, paralysis and impaired movement.

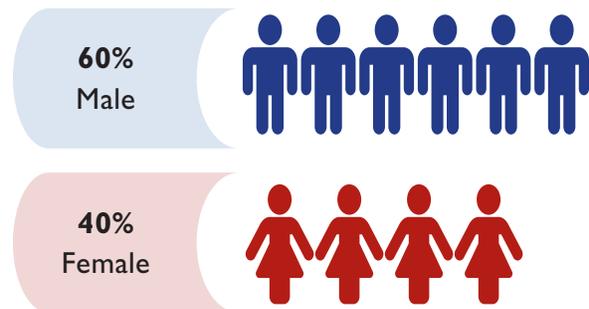
**Total number served: 89,283**

**Total number served under age 23: 26,485**

### Percent Served by Gender—All Ages



### Percent Served by Gender—Under Age 23



\*Gender is unknown or unavailable for 29 consumers; missing for 13 consumers under 23

### Percent Expenditure by Service Type

Category	All Ages	Under 23
Other Goods & Equipment	1%	0%
Post Acute Brain Injury	1%	0%
Maintenance & Transportation	3%	4%
Prosthetics & Orthotics	5%	1%
Job Placement Services	6%	5%
Assistive Technology	6%	1%
Other Services	4%	7%
Pre-Employment Transition Services	5%	15%
Medical Services	10%	1%
Supported Employment Services	9%	13%
Hearing Aids & Interpretive Services	14%	4%
Training	22%	41%
Diagnostic & Evaluation	15%	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

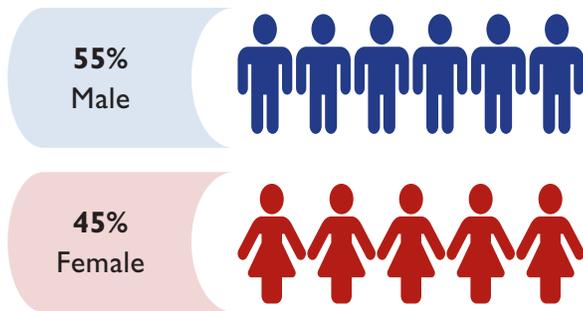
## Disabilities Served

Primary Disability	Number All Ages	Percent All Ages	Number Under Age 23	Percent Under Age 23
All Other Impairments	220	0%	93	0%
Cardiac/Respiratory/Circulatory	1,923	2%	150	1%
Traumatic Brain Injury/Spinal Cord Injury	1,961	2%	317	1%
Unavailable	7,623	9%	1,872	7%
Substance Abuse	1,990	2%	64	0%
Other Chronic Diseases/Disorders	5,404	6%	334	1%
Deaf & Hard of Hearing	13,362	15%	1,919	7%
Mental/Emotional/Psychosocial	16,058	18%	2,871	11%
Neurological /Musculoskeletal/Orthopedic	17,857	20%	2,416	9%
Neurodevelopmental Disorders	22,885	26%	16,449	62%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>89,283</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>26,485</b>	<b>100%</b>

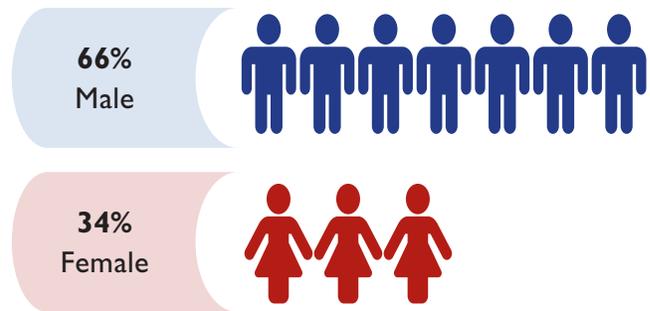
**Total successful closures: 14,037**

**Total successful closures under age 23: 2,465**

### Percent Served by Gender—All Ages



### Percent Served by Gender—Under Age 23



### Percent of Successful Closures by Occupation

Successful Closures by Occupation	Successful Closures All Ages	Successful Closures Under Age 23
All Other Occupations	0%	0%
Computer, Engineering & Science	2%	1%
Construction and Extraction	3%	2%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	4%	4%
Management, Business & Financial	5%	1%
Production	5%	6%
Sales & Related	7%	8%
Healthcare Practitioners, Technical & Healthcare Support	8%	5%
Education, Legal, Community Service, Arts & Media	8%	2%
Transportation & Material Moving	10%	8%
Office & Administrative Support	22%	29%
Service	24%	34%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Statistics: Visual Disabilities

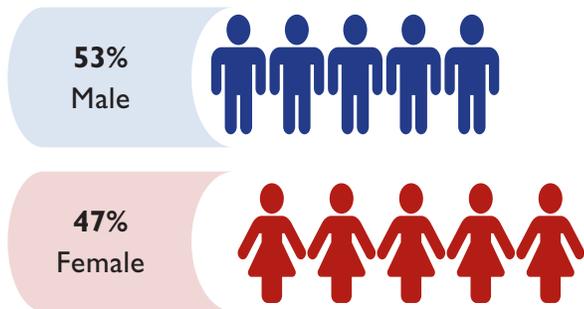
The following statistics describe vocational rehabilitation services for persons with visual disabilities provided in state fiscal year 2017. For age-related data, age reported at the start of the fiscal year was used.

Visual disabilities include blindness, significant visual impairments and deafblindness.

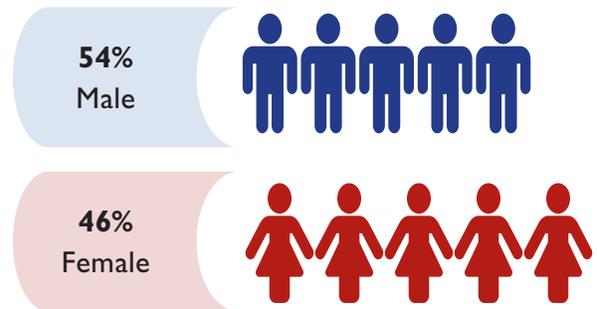
**Total number served:** 10,719

**Total number served under age 23:** 2,550

### Percent Served by Gender—All Ages



### Percent Served by Gender—Under Age 23



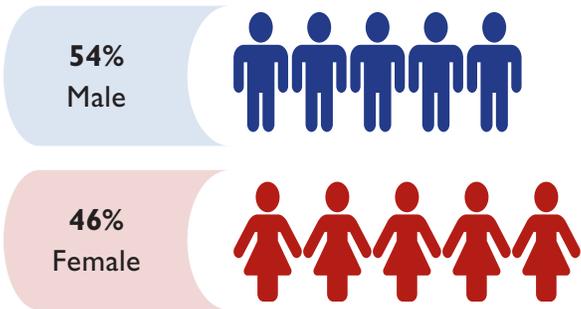
\*Gender is unknown or unavailable for 1,586 consumers (2 Under Age 23), the majority of whom have not completed an application.

### Percent Expenditure by Service Type

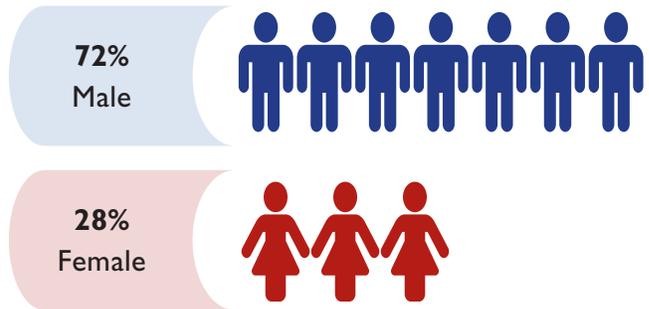
Service Category	All Ages	Under 23
Job Placement	1%	0%
Supported Employment	1%	2%
Eyeglasses, Lenses, Low Vision Devices, Orthotics/Prosthetics	3%	3%
Maintenance & Transportation	6%	10%
Diagnostic & Evaluation	6%	4%
All Other Goods & Services	10%	12%
Training (including Orientation & Mobility)	5%	3%
Assistive Technology, including related evaluation & training	22%	23%
Other Training	11%	26%
Pre-Employment Transition Services	10%	14%
Restoration Services	26%	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Total successful closures: 1,319

Percent Successful Closures by Gender—  
All Ages



Percent Successful Closures by Gender—  
Under Age 23



Percent of Successful Closures by Occupation

Successful Closures by Occupation	Successful Closures, All Ages	Percent Successful Closures, All Ages	Successful Closures, Under Age 23	Percent Successful Closures, Under Age 23
All Other Occupations	78	6%	0	0%
Computer, Engineering & Science	37	3%	1	2%
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	56	4%	2	3%
Construction and Extraction	49	4%	2	3%
Transportation & Material Moving	67	5%	8	13%
Healthcare Practitioners, Technical & Healthcare Support	103	8%	2	3%
Sales & Related	92	7%	6	9%
Management, Business & Financial	118	9%	3	5%
Production	113	9%	5	8%
Education, Legal, Community Service, Arts & Media	169	13%	6	9%
Office & Administrative Support	221	17%	14	22%
Service	214	16%	15	23%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,317</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100%</b>

## *Success Story* Summer Earn and Learn Employment Helps Set Career Paths for Students



Maureen and Alamo College EETC Supervisor Steve Duran

The Summer Earn and Learn program — a partnership between Texas Workforce Solutions Offices and Texas Workforce Solutions–Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS) staff — helps teenagers and young adult students with disabilities, aged 14 to 22, gain employment experience and build confidence and skills for lifelong success. Following are success stories that highlight how the Summer Earn and Learn program positively affected the lives of young workers and employers.

### **Maureen**

Maureen first learned of the Summer Earn and Learn program through Workforce Solutions Alamo Youth Services. After being selected to participate, Maureen was hired as greeter by the Alamo College Eastside Education and Training Center (EETC).

“Maureen’s primary responsibility was to welcome our customers,” said Alamo College EETC Supervisor Steve Duran. “However, she took initiative, watched another employee staff the front desk and instantly followed her lead. Maureen started answering phones and assisting students with other matters...always with a genuine smile on her face.”

Duran was so impressed with Maureen’s work ethic that he presented her with a \$500 scholarship to help pay for Maureen’s expenses to attend San Antonio College. Maureen aspires to become a sign language interpreter.

“Participating in the Summer Earn and Learn program was fantastic,” said Duran. “I’d do it again in a New York minute.”

To view a video of Maureen as she describes her success and accepts her scholarship, visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7bSNHfQIcl](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7bSNHfQIcl).



## **Dominique**

Before participating in the Summer Earn and Learn program, Dominique attended Workforce Solutions Central Texas' (Central Texas) Employability Training, in which he learned the work duties and responsibilities of a recreational aide staff person.

After his training, Dominique began his summer employment with the Clements Boys & Girls Club Woody Hall Unit. Witnessing Dominique's eagerness to learn, his Clements Boys & Girl Club supervisor provided bi-weekly reports to Central Texas on Dominique's dedication to his job and positive work ethic and demeanor.

"Dominique was an extremely conscientious and hard worker," said Clements Boys & Girls Club Unit Director Calvin Darthard. "We were impressed by how he motivated and inspired the students and look forward to participating in the Summer Earn and Learn program next summer."

Under the guidance of professional counselors, Dominique assisted third and fifth graders with behavior modification. Clements Boys & Girls Club was grateful of Dominique's desire to learn and the receptive interaction between him and the younger students. Clements Boys & Girls Club offered to retain Dominique after the Summer Earn and Learn program ended, and he enthusiastically accepted the offer to continue his employment. Dominique is also assisting the unit with its athletic programs.

"I enjoy coaching and motivating youth when they think they are defeated," said Dominique. "I like to remind them that winning is a team effort."



## Holly

As a young child interested in art, Holly always envisioned herself working as a graphics designer. When presented with the opportunity to be employed by a local printing company during the summer, Holly quickly accepted the offer.

Workforce Solutions North Texas partnered with employer Sawyer Printing & Promo to place Holly as a printing assistant within the company. Holly's duties included assisting with print orders and creating graphic designs. She also learned basic management skills needed to ensure printshop workflow and operations.

"We were delighted to have Holly with us for the summer," said business namesake owner Tim Sawyer. "Her keen interest of graphics design was a perfect fit for our company. Nothing but good came from the opportunity of providing Holly with a glimpse of what her future career might look like, and I know she will go far in her studies and the graphics design industry."

Holly is a student at Oklahoma Christian University and majoring in Graphic Design.

# Membership and Meetings

## Members



**Martha Garber, M.Ed., LPC-S, LMFT**

of Coppell is chair of the Council. Garber is director of applied research and development and adjunct faculty in the Department of Disability and Addictions Rehabilitation at the University of North Texas (UNT). At UNT, Garber directs Workplace Inclusion and Sustainable Employment. She is active in the professional and advocacy community serving as a board member of the North Texas Area Rehabilitation Association and a past president of the Texas Rehabilitation Association. Garber has served on the RCT since 2012 as a disability advocacy group representative. Garber was elected RCT chair in 2014 and reappointed to the RCT in 2015. She earned a bachelor's degree from Baylor University and a master's degree in counseling from the University of Louisiana at Monroe. Garber is also a licensed professional counselor supervisor and licensed marriage and family therapist.



**Joyce Delores Taylor, PE, MA, MS** of Houston is former vice chair of the Council. Taylor is President and Chief Executive officer of J's Dynamic Transformation. Taylor is a member of the Texas Workforce Investment Council, the Adult Education and Literacy Council, the Texas Education Agency Academic Achievement Designation Council, American Psychological Association, Society of Women Engineers, National Management Association, Federation of Houston Professional Women, Society of Human Resource Management, Houston Association for Industrial and Organizational Psychologists, Texas Society of Professional Engineers, and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. She is also past-chair of the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL) Alumni Association Executive Council. Taylor was reappointed to the RCT as the state workforce investment board representative, serving as the past vice chair and as a member of the Education and Membership Committee. She earned master's degrees in criminology, industrial and organizational psychology, and cross cultural/women's studies from the University of Houston-Clear Lake. Her undergraduate degrees include mathematics from Wilberforce University and electrical engineering from the University of Dayton as a dual-degree student. She was a study-abroad academic scholarship recipient to Hull University in Hull, England.



**Matt Berend** of Abilene is a vocational rehabilitation supervisor for the Texas Workforce Solutions - Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Prior to this, Berend worked as an unit program specialist and vocational rehabilitation counselor for the agency. He was also a recipient of VR services after a bull riding accident left him paralyzed. Berend has served on the RCT since 2015 as a vocational rehabilitation counselor representative. He is a member of the Texas Rehabilitation Association and is an active advocate for persons living with disabilities. Berend received his bachelor of social work from Tarleton State University in Stephenville and a master of rehabilitation counseling from Texas Tech University Health Science Center (TTUHSC) in Lubbock. In 2017, he received TTUHSC's presidential alumni award for the department of clinic counseling and mental health. Berend is also a licensed social worker and a certified rehabilitation counselor.



**James M. "Jim" Brocato** of Beaumont is the Executive Director of RISE Center for Independent Living. He is a member of the Texas Centers for Independent Living (TXCIL), Texas Area Health Education Center East (TAHEC), National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) and has served since 2013 as the Centers for Independent Living representative on the Texas State Independent Living Council. Brocato has an extensive knowledge of disability issues in the areas of disability advocacy, public policy, education, research and public service. He has over 25 years of experience in the Southeast Texas area managing and marketing healthcare/physician groups and nonprofit organizations; and has collaborated with numerous local/statewide nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies advocating for persons with disabilities. Brocato received a bachelor of arts in sociology and a master's degree in human services administration from St. Edward's University, Austin, TX.



**Neva Fairchild** of Carrollton is a National Independent Living & Employment Specialist for the American Foundation for the Blind Center on Vision Loss in Dallas. She serves on the International Board of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) and is chair of the Division on Aging and Secretary/Treasurer of the Information Technology Division. She has also served as president and secretary of the Texas Chapter of AER. She is Immediate Past President of the Braille Revival League of Texas and a former regent of Catholic Daughters of the Americas. She earned her bachelor's degree in rehabilitation science and a master's of science in rehabilitation counseling psychology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas. She worked for over 15 years for the state of Texas as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and Employment Assistance Specialist in blind services.



**JoAnne Fluke** of Abilene is the Independent Living Services Program Specialist at Disability in Action. Before she moved to Texas she was a former member of the Ms. Wheelchair Kansas Board, group leader for Kansas Youth Leadership Forum and staff for Camp MITIOG, a camp devoted to children living with Spina-Bifida. Fluke received a bachelor of arts in religion from Baker University in Baldwin City, Kansas. In her free time, she is an instructor for Zumba International Fitness, and she loves Ballroom Dancing. Her passion is to give people with disabilities the opportunity to pursue their passions.



**Cheryl Fuller** of Austin is the Director of the Vocational Rehabilitation Division at the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). She has 27 years of experience working in federally-funded programs focused on helping Texans prepare for, gain and retain employment. She served as assistant commissioner of the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), Division for Rehabilitation Services (DRS) from August 2013 to 2016, prior to transferring to TWC on September 1, 2016 with the former DARS programs. Fuller joined DARS in 2011 as the director of the agency's Center for Learning Management after serving more than 11 years as director of the Texas Workforce Investment Council in the Office of the Governor. Fuller began her career in Abilene, where she worked for almost nine years in employment and training programs funded by the Job Training Partnership Act and Workforce Investment Act. She was appointed as the DRS ex-officio member of the RCT in 2014.



**Rene Gonzalez, Ph.D.** of Alton is an Associate Professor at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in the School of Rehabilitation Services and Counseling. He earned his doctorate in rehabilitation psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral level teaching experience and more than 15 years of clinical experience in the field of rehabilitation counseling. In addition, Dr. Gonzalez has clinical experience in assisting veterans with psychiatric disabilities and students with various disabilities attending post-secondary training. He is a member of the National Council on Rehabilitation Education. His research interest includes, transition from high school to adult life, psychosocial aspects of chronic illness and disability, vocational rehabilitation, and employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Dr. Gonzalez was appointed to the RCT in 2014 as a vocational rehabilitation services recipient representative.



**Casey D. Hertel** of Abilene is a Community Integration Specialist/Relocations Follow-Up staff member for Disability In Action, where he formerly volunteered. Hertel is a past member of the Texas Association of Centers for Independent Living Consumer Advocacy Team and Statewide Independent Living Council Project Advisory Committee. He earned a medical assistant certification from the Southeastern Career Institute.



**Paul Hunt** of Austin retired from the Internal Revenue Service after 37 years of service. He is president of the Austin Council of the Blind and member of the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority Access Committee. Additionally, he is former chair and member of Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority Mobility Impaired Services Advisory Committee. Hunt received an associate's degree in liberal arts from Macomb County Community College in Warren, Michigan. He is a certified adaptive technology trainer and provides contract training for the Integration Technology Group.



**Susan "Susie" May** of Austin is a program specialist in the Division of Special Education at the Texas Education Agency (TEA). She has more than 30 years of expertise in the field of Special Education and is a retired teacher from North East Independent School District in San Antonio. May received a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Texas at San Antonio.



**Troyon "Troy" Myree** of Houston is an event staff member for the Contemporary Services Corporation. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps and is a life member of the organization Paralyzed Veterans of America. Troy is also a member of the Family to Family Network and a board member of the Barbara Jordan Endeavors Corporation. Troy was appointed to the RCT in 2014 as a vocational rehabilitation services recipient representative and is a member of the Policy, Procedure and Personnel Development Committee. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Houston-Downtown, a master's degree in social work from the University of Houston and an additional master's degree in healthcare administration from the University of Phoenix.



**Karen Stanfill** of Houston is an advocate supervisor for the Client Assistance Program (CAP) with Disability Rights Texas. Stanfill began her career in Goodwill Industries' Rehabilitation Department and worked for 15 years as a rehabilitation counselor. Stanfill is a member of the National Rehabilitation Association, the Texas Rehabilitation Association and the Houston Area Rehabilitation Association. She earned a bachelor's degree in rehabilitation counseling and business from Stephen F. Austin State University and is a certified rehabilitation counselor.



**Crystal Stark** of College Station is a vocational rehabilitation counselor at the Texas Workforce Commission. She has worked in the field of vocational rehabilitation for more than a decade and served as chair of the Accessibility Committee for the Texas Rehab Action Network, chair of the Mayor's Committee on People with Disabilities, committee chair for the Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living, and board member of the Texas Tech University Health Science Center Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling Advisory Board. Stark received a bachelor's of arts degree in psychology from Angelo State University and a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from Texas Tech University Health Science Center in Lubbock.



**Joe Tims** of Justin is a past president and a founding member of the Justin Lions Club, served on the Justin Business Association Board of Directors and various other boards. He served in the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Air Force Reserves. Tims was reappointed to the RCT in 2015 as a business, industry and labor representative and is chair of the Consumer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment Committee.



Karen Stanfill, RCT Policy, Procedure & Personnel Development Chair, presents the committee report. Others in pic Jim Brocato and CART Employee.

### *Spotlight:* **Become a Member**

If you are a person with a disability or someone interested in providing input on vocational rehabilitation services for Texans with disabilities, the Council may be for you.

Interested individuals must submit an application to the Texas governor. Council members are appointed by the governor for three-year terms and represent a diverse range of disabilities and community perspectives.

The Council must include representatives of the State Rehabilitation Program, State Independent Living Council, Community Rehabilitation Programs and other disability organizations and programs, as well as persons with disabilities, their families or authorized representatives. Business, industry and labor representatives, as well as those from the State Workforce Investment Board and Texas Education Agency, are also required.

Learn more by visiting [texasworkforce.org/agency/rehabilitation-council-texas](http://texasworkforce.org/agency/rehabilitation-council-texas)

## 2018 Rehabilitation Council of Texas Quarterly Meeting Schedule

Council members convene for quarterly meetings to participate in discussion panels, presentations and committee meetings in support of the Council's mission, values and responsibilities.

**All Meeting Times**  
 1st day 9:00 am – 4:30 pm  
 2nd day 9:00 am – noon

**All Meeting Locations**  
 Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center (CCRC)  
 4800 N. Lamar Blvd  
 Austin, TX 78756

2018 Quarterly Meeting Schedule
November 2-3, 2017
February 1-2, 2018
May 3-4, 2018
August 2-3, 2018

Additional meeting information and materials will be posted on the following web page as they become finalized at:

[texasworkforce.org/agency/rehabilitation-council-texas#meetingScheduleAgendasMinutes](http://texasworkforce.org/agency/rehabilitation-council-texas#meetingScheduleAgendasMinutes).

# Vocational Rehabilitation

## Partnering with the Texas Workforce Commission

Legislation authorized during the 84th Texas Legislative Session transferred vocational rehabilitation services to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) effective September 1, 2016. This legislation also abolished the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), the former state vocational rehabilitation agency and Council partner.

The Council partners with TWC to open doors to new possibilities for strengthening vocational rehabilitation services, as well as Texas' workforce and economy.

TWC's mission is to promote and support a workforce system that creates value and offers employers, individuals and communities the opportunity to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.

TWC is part of the Texas Workforce Solutions network, which is also comprised of 28 Local Workforce Development Boards and service-providing partners.

TWC and the Texas Workforce Solutions network have a long history of providing workforce training, education and support services to Texas job seekers. The network also coordinates with employers, economic development organizations and educators to develop a well-trained workforce that meets Texas' business needs.

With the transfer of vocational rehabilitation services to TWC under the program name Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the integration of vocational rehabilitation staff into Workforce Solutions offices statewide, the network's goal is to significantly increase employment opportunities for Texans with disabilities and better meet the needs of the state's diverse industries and employers.

To learn more, visit [texasworkforce.org/news/departments-assistive-rehabilitative-services-program-transition](http://texasworkforce.org/news/departments-assistive-rehabilitative-services-program-transition)



1.15 million Job Seekers received Workforce Solutions employment services in FY 2017.

### *Spotlight:* Benefits of Vocational Rehabilitation Transfer

The following benefits are expected with the transfer of vocational rehabilitation services to TWC:

- Texans with disabilities will go to one place to receive Workforce Solutions and vocational rehabilitation services when these staff colocate in shared offices by August 2018.
- Texans with disabilities will experience increased efficiency, resource sharing and purchasing power as vocational rehabilitation and Workforce Solutions staff begin to colocate and train as cross-functional teams.
- Texans with disabilities will gain access to an expanded network of employers across the state and a coordinated outreach campaign to additional employers.
- Texas employers will have access to more services, including vocational rehabilitation services to recruit, hire and retain employees with disabilities and customized services from local Boards such as workforce training programs, screening and referral, job fairs and labor market analytics.
- All six federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funded programs will be operated by TWC, resulting in more coordinated planning and delivery of services to Texans, including youth and students with disabilities.



85,248 employers received services from workforce boards in FY 2017.

# Timeline



## June 2015—

Governor Greg Abbott authorizes legislation to transfer the state's vocational rehabilitation services from the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) to TWC and abolish DARS.



## March 3, 2016—

Texas submits the WIOA State Plan to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor. This is a four-year plan for achieving the state's workforce goals.



## Sept. 1, 2016—

Vocational rehabilitation services transfer from DARS to TWC under a new program name: Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services.



## Oct. 1, 2017—

TWC integrates vocational rehabilitation for individuals with vision-related disabilities and individuals with general disabilities into a single program.



## By Aug. 31, 2018—

TWC integrates its vocational rehabilitation staff into the state's Local Workforce Development Boards and Workforce Solutions Offices to the extent possible.





## TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION

101 East 15th Street  
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Equal Opportunity Employer/Program

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