

BEYOND HIRING: CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYER SERVICES THAT WORK



TEXAS
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES



Benigno Aceves

Program Specialist for Business Relations
Communications and Partnerships
Texas Workforce Commission-Vocational Rehabilitation Division
benigno.aceves@twc.texas.gov



TEXAS
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

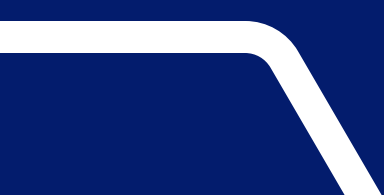


Ricardo Rendon

Business Relations Coordinator
Region 6, Regional Office
Texas Workforce Commission-Vocational Rehabilitation Division
ricardo.rendon@twc.texas.gov



OBJECTIVES

- Increase understanding of how VR services support employers in recruiting, hiring, and retaining talent with disabilities.
 - Highlight the types of accommodations, accessibility tools, and training resources available through VR.
 - Demonstrate how VR collaborates with employers and workforce partners to align services with business needs.
 - Share examples of customized initiatives such as the Skills Training to Employment Program (STEP), that address specific business needs and workforce gaps.
- 

What Group Do You Represent?

- Employer
- Workforce Solutions
- TWS-VRS
- Community Partner
- Other





What's Your Experience with VR?

What comes to mind when you hear "Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)"?

- ☐ Worked directly with a VR staff member
- ☐ Participated in a joint initiative or job fair
- ☐ Received a referral or training from VR
- ☐ Heard of VR but haven't collaborated yet

UNDERSTANDING VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR)



FACT OR FICTION



TEXAS
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

FACT OR FICTION?

» VR only serves individuals with severe disabilities.

Reveal: **Fiction.**

VR supports people with all types of disabilities, physical, sensory, mental health, and intellectual.

FACT OR FICTION?,cont 1

» VR helps both students and adults prepare for work.

Reveal: **Fact.**

We start as early as age 14 through Pre -Employment Transition Services and continue supporting adults through training, employment, and retention.

FACT OR FICTION?, cont 2

» You must receive Social Security to qualify for VR.

Reveal: **Fiction.**

Social Security recipients are automatically eligible, but many VR customers are not on benefits. Eligibility is based on disability and employment goals.

FACT OR FICTION?, cont 3

» VR services are available to employers, not just job seekers.

Reveal: **Fact.**

VR partners with businesses to help them recruit, hire, and retain qualified talent with disabilities.

FACT OR FICTION?, cont 4

» VR only focuses on entry -level jobs.

Reveal: **Fiction.**

VR supports employment at all levels, from entry -level to professional and technical careers, based on customer skills and business needs.

FACT OR FICTION?, cont 5

» VR operates separately from Workforce Solutions.

Reveal: **Fiction.**

We're part of the Texas Workforce Solutions network, collaborating daily to support job seekers and employers.

FACT OR FICTION?, cont 6

» Businesses working with VR have access to a national network.

Reveal: **Fact.**

The National Employment Team (The NET) connects businesses to qualified talent in all 50 states through coordinated VR partnerships.

VISION AND MISSION

Vision

Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation is a leader in employment services for people with disabilities, contributing to their independence, inclusion, and economic success.



Mission

Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation exists to help people with disabilities achieve their employment goals, preparing, obtaining, retaining, and advancing in their chosen career paths.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITY ACT

Under ADA, an individual with a disability is a person who:

(1)has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; OR (2) has a record of such an impairment; OR (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.

ADA also:

- Prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities
- Ensures “effective communication” for people with disabilities in programs, goods and services.

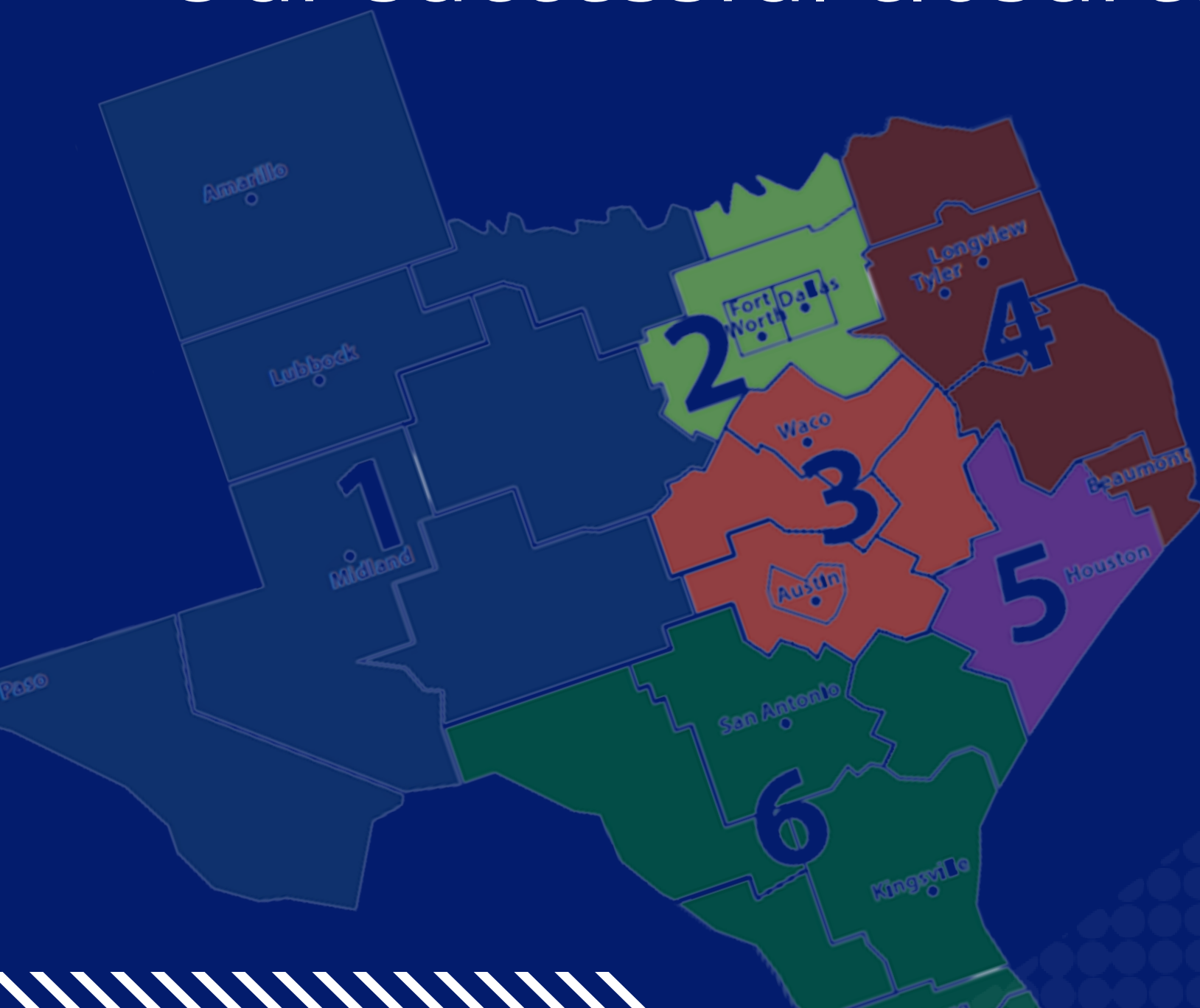
Source: <http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/902cm.html#902.1b>



STATEWIDE IMPACT

Our successful closures for FY24:

10,197



THE DUAL CUSTOMER

Serving Both Sides of the Employment Equation

- Job Seekers: Individuals with disabilities seeking meaningful work.
- Employers: Businesses looking for skilled, reliable talent.

VR's success is built on connecting these two customers.



SERVICES TO ASSIST WITH EMPLOYMENT

- Vocational counseling and guidance
- Referrals for hearing, visual and other examinations
- Assistance with medical appointments and treatment
- Rehabilitation devices, including hearing aids, wheelchairs, artificial limbs and braces
- Therapy to address a disability, including occupational or speech therapy and applied behavioral analysis
- Physical restoration services
- Medical, psychological and vocational assessments
- Assistance with college education or trade certification
- On-the-job training
- Training in workplace and employer expectations
- Vocational adjustment training
- Rehabilitation Teachers Services to help you learn Braille, orientation & mobility, and home and health management skills if you are blind or have a visual impairment
- Supported employment
- Job Matching and Job Placement

SERVICES FOR YOUTH AND STUDENTS

Pre-Employment Transition Services:

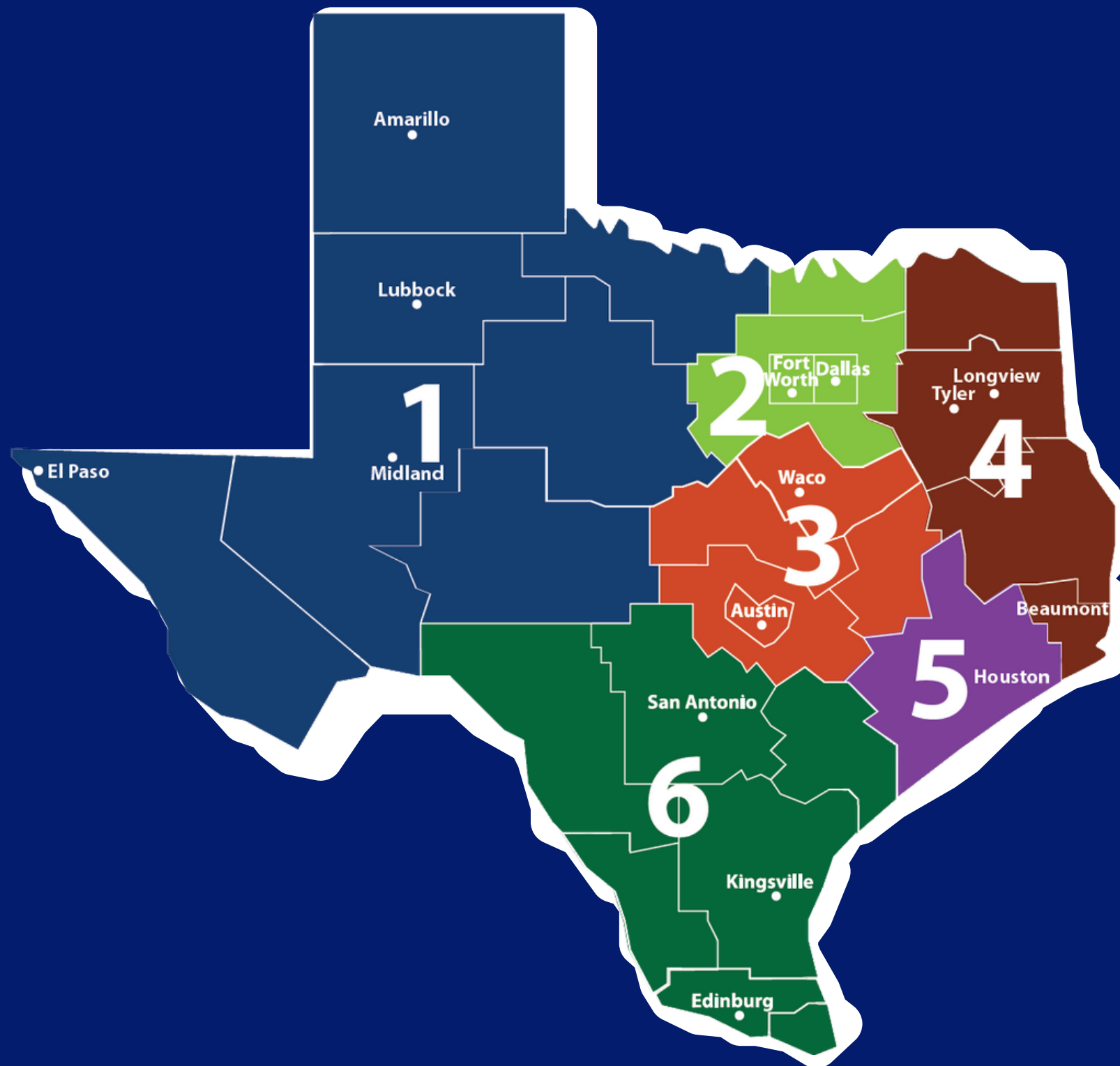
- Vocational counseling, including counseling in job exploration and postsecondary training opportunities
- Counseling on opportunities for postsecondary education such as college, vocational schools, etc.
- Work-based learning experiences, including internships and on-the-job training
- Training in workplace and employer expectations
- Training in self-advocacy and social skills

OLDER INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BLIND

Our Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind (IL-OIB) serve people 55 and older with significant visual impairments who need assistance with independent living skills, technology and support services.



Vocational Rehabilitation Business Services



TEXAS
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
★ ★ ★ ★ ★
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

A proud partner of the
American**Job**Center® network

Business Partnerships that **Work**

The Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Business Team partners with employers to understand their hiring needs and provide customizable no cost services tailored to fit your business!

Disability does not have to stand between you and a qualified worker.



TEXAS
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Vocational Rehabilitation Business Services - Business Relations Coordinators

State Office Team Lead

Benigno Aceves

Program Specialist for
Business Relations
(281) 906-4987
benigno.aceves@twc.texas.gov

Region 1 Panhandle/West TX

Felicia Patrick

(915) 217-5704
felicia.patrick@twc.texas.gov

David Shawver

(940) 217-9310
david.shawver@twc.texas.gov

Workforce Solutions offices:

Panhandle
South Plains
North Texas
West Central Texas
Borderplex (El Paso)
Permian Basin
Concho Valley

Region 2

DFW/Texoma Regional Office

Deb Jones

(817) 608-6567
debra.jones@twc.texas.gov

Alison Burns

(682) 205-9238
alison.burns@twc.texas.gov

Workforce Solutions offices:

North Central Texas
Greater Dallas
Tarrant County
Texoma

Region 4 East TX

Jacki Everhart-Thompson

(903) 216-7950
jacki.everhart-thompson@twc.texas.gov

Christina Ward

(409) 617-1369
christina.ward@twc.texas.gov

Workforce Solutions offices:

Northeast Texas
East Texas
Deep East Texas
Southeast Texas

Region 6 South TX

Ricardo Rendon

(956) 369-3526
ricardo.rendon@twc.texas.gov

Nicholas Casillas

(210) 243-8108
nicholas.casillas@twc.texas.gov

Workforce Solutions offices:

Golden Crescent
Alamo
South Texas
Coastal Bend
Lower Rio Grande Valley
Cameron County
Middle Rio Grande

Region 3 Central TX

Arthur Jones

(512) 202-7318
arthur.jones2@twc.texas.gov

Jonathan Mize

(254) 230-6668
jonathan.mize@twc.texas.gov

Workforce Solutions offices:

Heart of Texas
Capital Area
Rural Capital Area
Brazos Valley
Central Texas

Region 5 Gulf Coast

Fernando Rivera

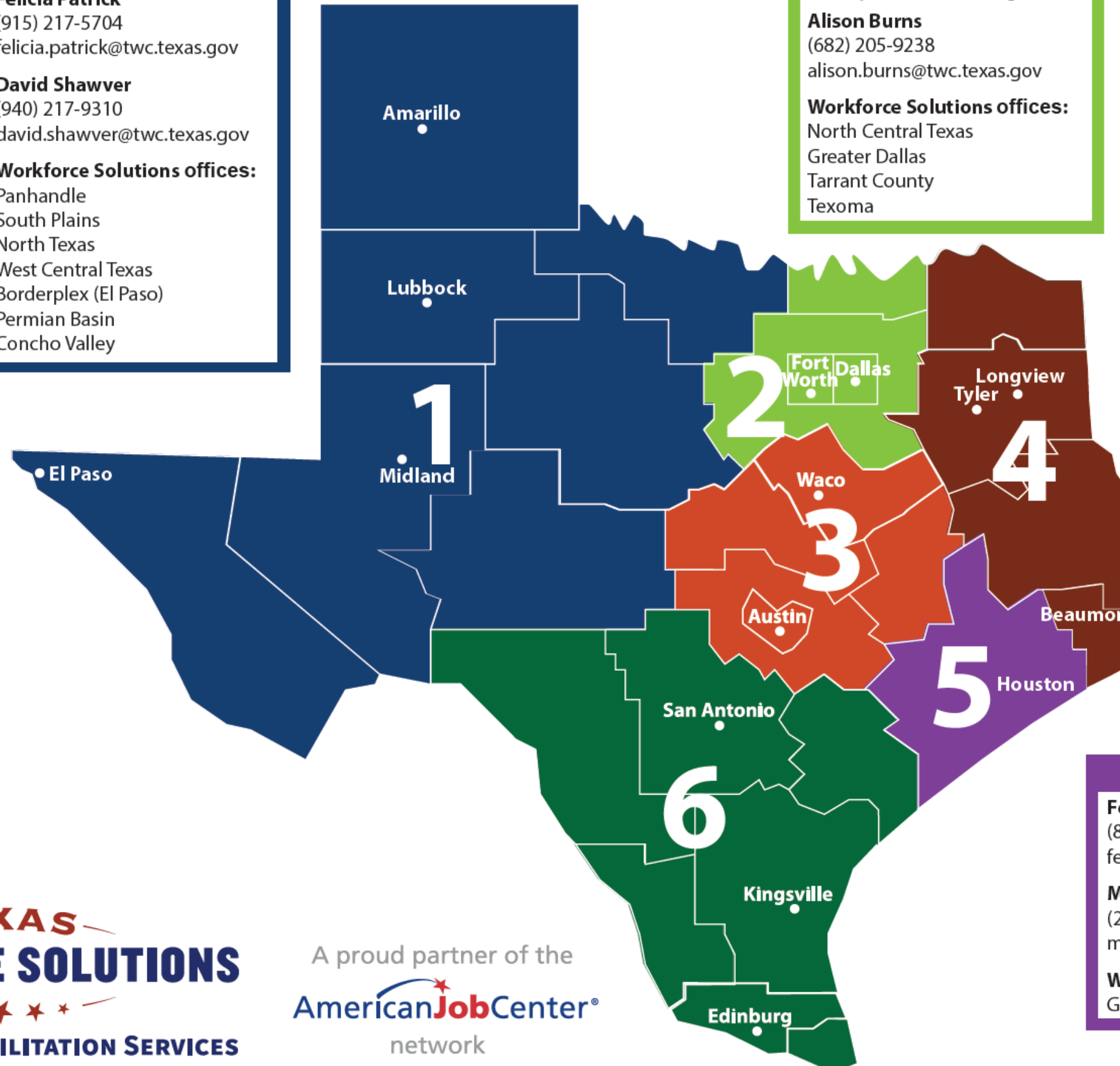
(832) 785-8277
fernando.rivera@twc.texas.gov

Miesha Smith

(281) 740-3841
miesha.smith@twc.texas.gov

Workforce Solutions office:

Gulf Coast



TEXAS
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

A proud partner of the
AmericanJobCenter
network

NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT TEAM | NET



The NET vision statement:

To create a coordinated approach to serving business customers through a national VR team that specialized in employer development, business consulting and corporate relations.

THE NET



78 public Vocational Rehabilitation programs

Provides a “ONE COMPANY” approach to working with business customers.

The 78 VR Directors have each named a business consultant that functions as the designated point of contact for their agency. These 78 points of contact, through CSAVR leadership and support, form the National Employment Team or The NET.

WHY WORKPLACE INCLUSION MAKES BUSINESS SENSE

- 61 million adults in the U.S. live with a disability: 1 in 4 adults.
- Largest diversity group in the nation, one anyone can join at any time.
- In Texas, 940,000+ individuals in the labor force have a disability, about 7% of the total workforce.
- 490,000+ Texans with disabilities hold a bachelor's degree or higher.

COMMON BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

- Physical Barriers
- Communication Barriers
- Systemic Barriers
- Policies, practices or procedures that result in persons receiving unequal access or being excluded
- Implicit bias, stereotyping, stigma.
- Technology Barriers



THE MEDIAN COST OF A REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION IS:

- A) \$5,000
- B) \$10,000
- C) \$300
- D) \$1,000



THE BIGGEST BARRIER ...

Which barrier plays the biggest role in preventing people with disabilities from employment?

- Physical
- Communication
- Technology
- Systemic
- Attitudinal

THE BIGGEST BARRIER is

Attitudinal

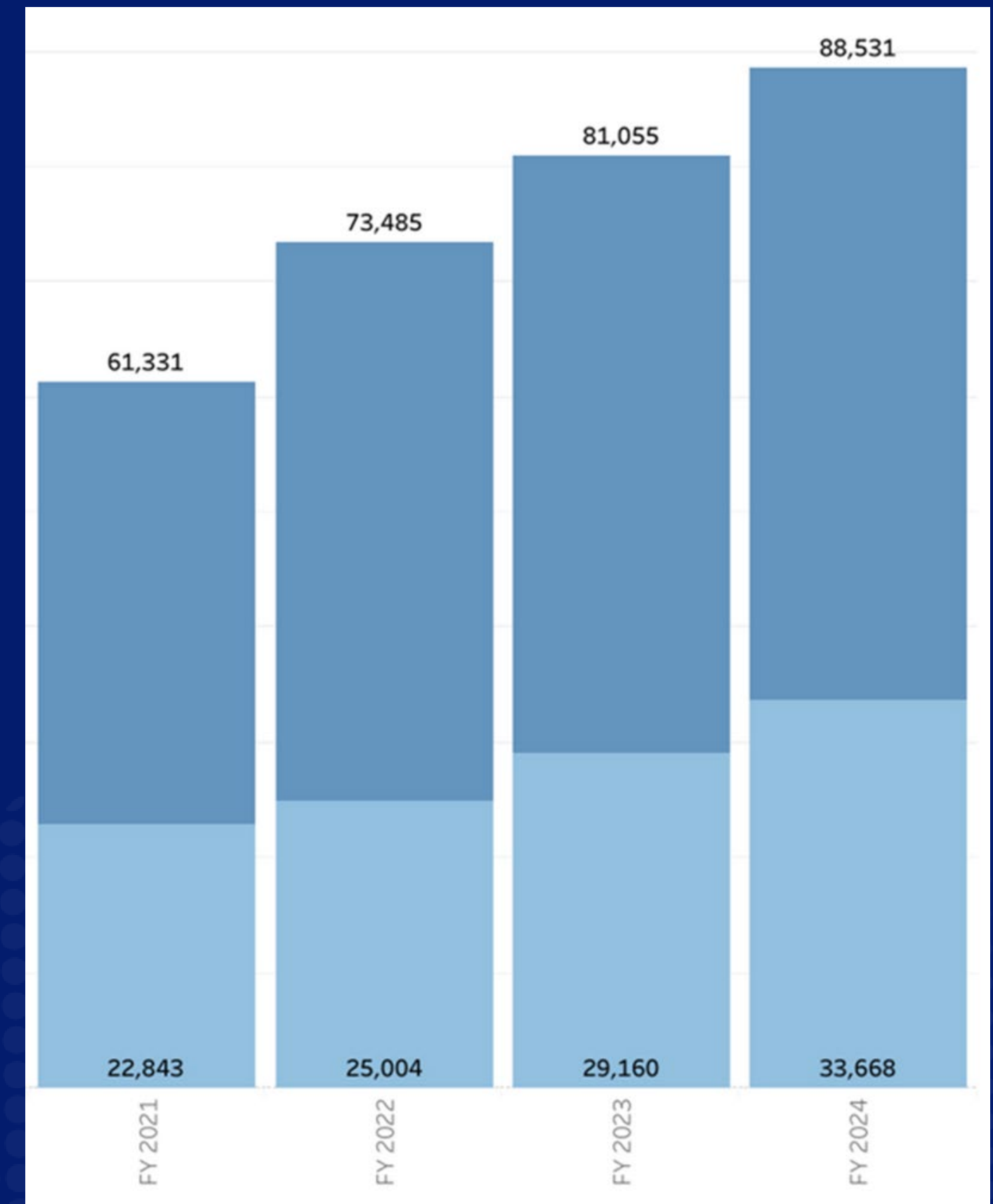
EEOC DISABILITY RELATED CHARGES

The EEOC received **88,531** charges of discrimination in fiscal year 2024.

Of those, **33,668** charges (about 38 %) alleged disability discrimination.

Types of cases: Discharge, Reasonable Accommodations, and Harassment

[EEOC.GOV](https://www.eeoc.gov)



WHAT VR OFFERS EMPLOYERS

- Individualized Recruitment
- Hiring & Retention Assistance
- Disability Awareness & Education
- Training & Work-Based Learning Programs
- Assistive Technology Consultation
- Financial Incentive Information (WOTC, DAC, etc.)

WHAT IS WOTC?

- A federal income tax benefit administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, for private, for profit employers who hire from target populations.
- Hiring from a select group of qualified job seekers can mean direct federal tax savings ranging from \$1,200 to \$9,600 per qualifying employee.
- Complete IRS Form 8850 (Prescreening Notice and Certification Request) and ETS Form 9061 (Individuals Characteristics Form).
- Or complete IRS Form 8850 and ETA form 9062 (Conditional Certification Form) provided to the job seeker by TWC or a participating agency.
- Forms must be postmarked within 28 days of the employee's start date.
- Website: www.texasworkforce.org/wotc

STEP: SKILLS TRAINING TO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

- Designed for VR customers with limited work experience or barriers to traditional interviews.
- Builds real-world work skills that match employer entry-level needs.
- Helps employers fill open positions with individuals trained on site in the specific skills and tasks needed for those roles.
- Allows employers to observe participants' performance before hiring.
- Creates a structured pathway from training to employment through collaboration with VR and Employment Service Providers (ESPs).

STEP focuses on meeting both, customer and business needs.

STEP BY THE NUMBERS

- »» 11 Active Worksites
- »» 130 Participants Completed
- »» 59 Hired



STEP: TESTIMONIAL

“After completing the STEP program with UT Health Tyler, C. Starks gained confidence, connected with hospital managers, and was encouraged to apply for her current role, securing the position after two interviews”

– C. Starks, Simulation Specialist.

STEP: TESTIMONIAL, cont 1

“Hosting interns has transformed team culture and allowed team members to mentor interns and showcase leadership skills. It also provides the opportunity to evaluate interns before hiring them”

– Cassie, UT Site Coordinator.

STEP: TESTIMONIAL, cont 2

“VR support throughout the application process and having a job coach stay until I learned all my job duties helped me secure employment with Nacogdoches Memorial Hospital. I continue to enjoy my work”

– Michael, Nacogdoches Memorial Hospital

- ESPs provide job readiness and work experience support.
- Partners stay in close communication for success.
- A true **WIN-WIN** for everyone!

RECAP OF STEP

- STEP connects VR customers and businesses.
- Customers gain job readiness skills, confidence, and real work experience.
- Employers fill open positions with individuals trained on site for their job needs.
- A true WIN-WIN for everyone!



FACT OR FICTION? Wrap Up

» If a workplace isn't accessible, the only person who loses out is the job seeker with a disability.

Reveal: **Fiction.**

When a job or workplace isn't accessible, **everyone loses.**

LEVELS OF COLLABORATION

- »» Level one - Co-existence
- »» Level two - Communication
- »» Level three - Cooperation
- »» Level four - Collaboration



CHARACTERISTICS TO ACHIEVE LEVEL FOUR OF COLLABORATION

- Level one - Co-existence Acknowledges, articulates, and experiences a sense of ownership of a common mission.
- Achieves a sense of unity accompanied by a desire to work together for a common goal.
- Decides to identify, value, and bring together the various expertise and experience.



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF
PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES
• DECEMBER 03 •

Celebrating NDEAM



Celebrating Value and Talent

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

WE HIRE ABILITY EMPLOYER RECOGNITION PROGRAM

The program celebrates and highlights Texas employers for the commitment to hiring individuals with disabilities and recognizing employers' important role in helping to ensure a diverse and inclusive Workforce.



wehireability@twc.texas.gov
WeHireAbili ty

— TEXAS —
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
— ★ ★ ★ ★ —

PARTNERING FOR PROGRESS

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

– Hellen Keller

Together, we connect Texans to meaningful careers, help businesses strengthen their workforce, and build thriving communities across our state.



TEXAS
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
★★★★★
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

THANK YOU

vrbusinessrelations@twc.texas.gov

Please take a moment to
complete our Business
Partner Feedback Form



TWC CONTACT INFORMATION

Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services

101 East 15th Street

Austin, Texas 78778-0001

512-936-6400

VR.office.locator@twc.texas.gov

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

The Texas Workforce Commission accepts calls made through any relay service provider.

FEDERAL FUNDING INFORMATION

These activities are financed under the TWC Federal Vocational Rehabilitation grant. For the Federal fiscal year 2025 (October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025), TWC anticipates expending \$350,922,000 in Federal Vocational Rehabilitation funds. Funds appropriated by the State pay a minimum of 21.3% of the total costs (\$94,976,348) under the Vocational Rehabilitation program. Revised June 2025.

For purposes of the Supported Employment program, the Vocational Rehabilitation agency receives 94.7 percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For the 2025 Federal fiscal year, the total amount of grant funds awarded are \$678,556. The remaining 5.3 percent (\$37,698) are funded by Texas State Appropriations. Revised June 2025.

For purposes of the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals who are Blind program, the Vocational Rehabilitation agency receives 90 percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For the 2025 Federal fiscal year, the total amount of grant funds awarded are \$2,246,003. The remaining 10 percent (\$249,556) are funded by Texas State Appropriations. Revised June 2025.