# VR-SFP Chapter 14: Work Experience

This chapter has been revised and will take effect January 15, 2020.

## 14.1 Overview of Work Experience Services

Work Experience services allow a customer to be placed at a business or agency within the community to learn transferable skills for long-term, competitive, integrated employment. These entities are referred to as “Work Experience sites”. Work Experience services are intended to be short-term (12 or fewer weeks) and part-time. Work Experience can take place in a volunteer, internship, or temporary short-term paid-work setting.

Work Experience services are available for students or youth with disabilities and basic Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) customers and may be used to determine a customer’s eligibility for VR.

Work Experience may assist in:

* determining if a customer is ready for competitive, integrated employment;
* evaluating if, after a change in the customer’s abilities or newly acquired vocational barriers, the customer continues to have the capacity to work in a particular field;
* exploring a customer’s career options;
* developing skills to increase a customer’s employability; and/or
* giving a customer additional experience related to vocational training or a degree.

Work Experience services provide an opportunity for customers to:

* learn and experience work culture;
* identify career interests;
* explore potential career goals;
* identify on-the-job support needs;
* develop employability skills and good work habits;
* gain an understanding of employer expectations;
* build self-confidence;
* develop soft and hard skills;
* gain work experience and competencies in a vocation;
* develop an understanding of the workplace; and/or
* gain the connection between working and earning.

A customer must have unexpired employment authorization documents to participate in Work Experience services.

Texas Workforce Solutions VR (TWS-VR) can pay the wages for customers participating in a Paid Work Experience, but a provider should not offer this option when negotiating a Work Experience Placement without prior written approval on the [VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report.](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) A [VR3142 Worksite Agreement for Wage Services – WorkQuest](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) between the Work Experience site and TWS-VR must be signed by the Work Experience site when TWS-VR sponsors the payment of the customer’s wage and associated costs, including workers’ compensation during the participation in a Work Experience Placement.

This chapter defines two services that are included in Work Experience:

* [Work Experience Placement (section 14.3)](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-14%22%20%5Cl%20%22s143): Assists the customer in securing and setting up an appropriate Work Experience site; and
* [Work Experience Training (section 14.4)](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-14%22%20%5Cl%20%22s145): Provides:
	+ monitoring to ensure the customer meets the Work Experience site’s expectations and has supports and accommodations necessary to be successful; and/or
	+ training at the Work Experience site.

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor is not required to purchase Work Experience Placement before authorizing Work Experience Training. However, VR may place the customer and then purchase Work Experience Training.

VR will not pay any provider for Job Placement services, including Supported Employment services, if a customer is hired into permanent employment by the Work Experience site during or after Work Experience services. If necessary, job skills training can be purchased when the customer begins a permanent employment placement.

Premiums may be available for Work Experience services. Premiums are paid after all deliverables for the service have been achieved. For more information about premiums, see [Chapter 20: Premiums](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-20).

## 14.2 Staff Qualifications

Before any services are provided to customers, the Employment Service Provider's (ESP) director must approve the [VR3455, Provider Staff Information Form](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), completed by each staff member, and submit the approved forms to the provider's assigned VR regional quality assurance program specialist or regional program support specialist. The VR3455, Provider Staff Information Form, must document qualifications and provide evidence of meeting all qualifications such as transcripts, diplomas, reference letters, credentials, or licenses.

Staff qualifications for each service are described below. University of North Texas Workplace Inclusion and Suitable Employment (UNTWISE) Texas credential information can be gained at [www.wise.unt.edu/crptraining](http://wise.unt.edu/crptraining).

A non-credentialed provider staff member can provide services to a VR customer only when the Temporary Waiver of Employment Services Credential Standards are followed. For more information, refer to [Chapter 3: Basic Standards, 3.1.6.4 Temporary Waiver of Staff Qualifications](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03#s316).

The Work Experience specialist must meet the qualifications and credentials of a job placement specialist.

The Work Experience trainer must meet the qualifications and credentials of a job skills trainer.

## 14.3 Work Experience Placement

### 14.3.1 Service Description

The Work Experience specialist assists the customer in the process of locating and setting up a Work Experience site that meets the criteria documented on the [VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html).

Work Experience Placements are classified into three levels based on the O\*NET (Occupational Information Network) My Next Move Job Zones at <https://www.onetonline.org/find/zone>. The following is an overview of each level:

#### Entry Level

* Includes O\*NET’s My Next Move Job Zones one and two
* Used for the following reasons:
	+ To determine if the customer is ready for competitive, integrated employment
	+ To explore possible career options for the customer; and/or
	+ To develop skills to increase the customer’s employability
* Customers typically have the following knowledge, experience, responsibilities, and level of supervision needs:
	+ Little or no previous work-related skill, knowledge, or experience
	+ Some transferable skills or basic knowledge from experience
	+ Knowledge of the tasks, duties, and responsibilities related to the position
	+ Follows standard procedures and written instructions to accomplish assigned tasks
	+ Work is routine and tasks are standardized and/or
	+ Works under direct supervision
* Customers typically have a high school diploma or GED certificate
* Examples of positions can be found at [Job Zone One](https://www.onetonline.org/find/zone?z=1&g=Go) and [Job Zone Two](https://www.onetonline.org/find/zone?z=2&g=Go)
* Gross income earned by the customer will be $10.80 per hour

#### Intermediate Level

* Includes O\*NET’s My Next Move Job Zone three
* Used for the following reasons:
* To demonstrate skills and gain experience related to vocational training or an associate degree
* To evaluate if a customer still has capacity to continue to work in a field due to acquired vocational barrier(s).
* Customers typically have the following knowledge, experience, responsibilities, and level of supervision needs:
* Previous work-related skill, knowledge, or experience (for example, completion of training program)
* Demonstrates and applies the fundamental concepts, practices, and procedures of a particular field of specialization
* Performs varied work that may be somewhat difficult; and/or
* With minimum supervision, performs work that is somewhat difficult and requires limited responsibility
* Customers typically have completed an apprenticeship, have one or two years of vocational training (for example, a certificate program or on-the-job training), or have an associate degree
* Examples of positions can be found at [Job Zone Three](https://www.onetonline.org/find/zone?z=3&g=Go)
* Gross income earned by the customer will be $13.92 per hour

#### Advanced Level

* Includes O\*NET’s My Next Move Job Zone four
* Used for the following reasons:
* To demonstrate skills and gain experience related to a degree; and/or
* To evaluate if a customer with vocational barriers still has the capacity to continue to work in a particular field
* Customers typically have the following knowledge, experience, responsibilities, and level of supervision needs:
* Works with general supervision
* Possesses and applies a broad knowledge of principles, practices, and procedures of a particular field of specialization to the completion of difficult assignments
* Work responsibilities may be broad in nature; and/or
* Competent in skills and may assist or teach others
* Customers typically have completed a four-year bachelor or higher degree
* Examples of positions can be found at [Job Zone Four](https://www.onetonline.org/find/zone?z=4&g=Go); and
* Gross income earned by the customer will be $20.32 per hour

A planning meeting is held with the VR counselor, customer, and Work Experience specialist to complete the VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report.

Work Experience Placement must meet the following criteria outlined on the VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report:

* One six-digit Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code listed in the work experience goals section of the form
* 100 percent of the nonnegotiable work experience conditions
* 50 percent or more of the negotiable work experience conditions

A customer's Work Experience Placement must be at a site where the environment is considered integrated, unless otherwise indicated on the VR1601, to meet the customer’s individual needs. When the customer is paid a wage, it must be competitive. For the federal definition of competitive wages, see [Competitive Integrated Employment.](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-17%22%20%5Cl%20%22s171Competitive%20Integrated%20Employment.)

While securing and setting up a Work Experience Placement for the customer, the Work Experience specialist, as applicable, may perform and/or assist the customer with:

* researching and identifying potential Work Experience sites;
* completing any tasks necessary to secure the Work Experience site such as:
	+ attending classes or meetings;
	+ completing applications;
	+ obtaining references;
	+ interviewing;
	+ obtaining criminal background checks;
	+ obtaining health checks;
	+ completing testing (personality, drug, and skills);
	+ identifying accommodation needs;
	+ assisting the customer with disability disclosure when applicable; and
* the steps necessary to follow up on potential Work Experience site or opportunities.

Once a Work Experience site has been secured, the Work Experience specialist assists the customer with the arrangement of transportation to get to and from the work site.

During the first five shifts or days, for no more than five total hours, the Work Experience specialist accompanies the customer to the work site and may perform and/or assist:

* the customer with:
	+ advocating for the customer to receive the opportunity to gain skills, support, and mentoring, when necessary, to foster a positive outcome at the Work Experience site;
	+ orientation to workplace roles and responsibilities;
	+ understanding expectations related to job performance, behavior, and social interactions at the Work Experience site;
	+ disability disclosure, setting up accommodations or support needs, including Work Experience training at the Work Experience site; and
	+ understanding the purpose of the Work Experience trainer, when applicable, including trainer roles and responsibilities; and
* the employer by:
	+ educating the Work Experience site and employees in disability-related issues, such as disability awareness, disability etiquette, the Americans with Disabilities Act, disability accommodations; and
	+ educating the Work Experience site on the roles of the Work Experience trainer, when applicable.

When a Work Experience trainer is going to work with a customer, the Work Experience specialist works with the VR counselor, the customer, and the Work Experience site to identify goals to be addressed in the Work Experience training. When necessary, the Work Experience specialist and Work Experience trainer can work simultaneously with a customer for up to five hours.

The Work Experience Placement is achieved after the customer completes five days or shifts at the Work Experience site.

Multiple Work Experience Placements for the same customer are allowed if they are necessary to meet the customer's goals. Each Work Experience Placement must aid in the development of soft and hard skills that the customer has not yet mastered and that will assist the customer with career exploration and development of work-readiness skills. A customer should not be placed in the same type of position more than once at the same Work Experience site. If a provider assists with multiple Work Experience Placements, a service authorization is issued for each Work Experience Placement after the VR1601 is completed.

A Work Experience Placement can be an internship, paid, or volunteer position. When a customer obtains a Work Experience Placement, it is the responsibility of the Work Experience site to determine, based on labor laws, whether the placement will be:

* volunteer;
* compensated or uncompensated internship; or
* short-term, temporary work paid by the Work Experiencer site or sponsored by TWS-VR.

The Work Experience specialist who is assisting the customer in gaining a Work Experience Placement should refer the Work Experience site to the following links if they have questions regarding how to classify the customer’s work experience:

For information on volunteering and federal labor law—[Volunteering and Federal Labor Law](https://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/whd/flsa/docs/volunteers.asp).

For information on internship and the Federal Labor Act—[Internship and the Federal Labor Act](http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf).

With volunteer positions, it is important the customer understands they will not be paid for their time.

With internships, it is important the customer understands what, if any, compensation they will receive by completing the internship.

With Paid Work Experience positions, it is important the customer understand that they will be paid by either:

* the Work Experience site; or
* TWS-VR, when approved by the VR counselor on the [VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html).

TWS-VR can sponsor paid wages for a customer participating in a Paid Work Experience, but a provider cannot offer this option when negotiating a placement without prior written approval on the [VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report.](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html)

When TWS-VR sponsors payment of a customer’s wages and associated costs, including workers’ compensation during the participation in a Work Experience Placement, the [VR3142, Worksite Agreement for Wage Service provided - WorkQuest](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) must be signed by the Work Experience site. The VR3142 indicates that the Work Experience site has agreed that TWS-VR can pay the customer for work performed at the business and that the Work Experience site will report the hours the customer works. The Work Experience specialist or VR staff may gather the signed [VR3142](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html)  from the Work Experience site.

VR cannot pay for a Work Experience Placement that is longer than 12 weeks unless there is a vocational need and it is approved by the VR counselor’s manager. When a manager approves increasing the length of a Work Experience, a VR3472 is not required.

Any request to change the Work Experience Placement service description, process and procedure, or the outcomes required for payment must be documented and approved by the VR director using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) form, before the change is implemented.

### 14.3.2 Process and Procedure

The provider receives the [VR1600, Work Experience Referral](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), from the VR counselor. The referral must identify the date, time, and location for the Work Experience planning meeting.

Before any Work Experience Placement services are provided, a planning meeting must be held with the VR counselor, customer, and Work Experience specialist to complete the [VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report,](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), which outlines the criteria for the Work Experience Placement. The VR1601 will indicate if TWS-VR will sponsor wages and associated costs, including workers’ compensation.

The Work Experience specialist assists the customer with securing a Work Experience Placement as described in section 14.3.1 Service Description. When applicable the Work Experience specialist assists in the arrangement of transportation for the customer to get to and from the work site, as well as obtaining the [VR3142, Worksite Agreement for Wage Service provided - WorkQuest](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) form signed by the employer.

After the Work Experience site has been secured, during the first five shifts/days for no more than five total hours of the work experience, the Work Experience specialist accompanies the customer to the work site to assist both the customer and the business in setting up the Work Experience, as described in section 14.3.1 Service Description.

The provider submits a complete and accurate [VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), and invoice after the customer works or volunteers five days or shifts at the Work Experience site. Once the form and invoice have been approved by the VR counselor, the invoice is paid.

### 14.3.3 Outcomes Required for Payment

The Work Experience specialist documents in descriptive terms the information required on the [VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report,](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) including:

* information describing the Work Experience site;
	+ evidence of how the Work Experience Placement was secured and that it meets the criteria established on the VR1601, including:
		- one six-digit SOC code listed in the Work Experience Goals section;
		- 100 percent of the nonnegotiable work experience conditions; and
		- 50 percent or more of the negotiable work experience conditions;
* evidence that the customer has participated in the Work Experience Placement, being on-site, working, volunteering, or completing an internship for at least five days or shifts;
* evidence that the Work Experience specialist assisted the customer in securing the Work Experience site;
* evidence that the Work Experience specialist accompanied the customer to the Work Experience site during the first day(s), for no more that up to five hours total, to provide assistance, training, and support to both the customer and the Work Experience site;
* evidence that the Work Experience specialist identified and requested additional support from VR, such as Work Experience training, as necessary to ensure the customer's success; and
* evidence that a signed [VR3142, Worksite Agreement for Wage Service provided - WorkQuest](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) was obtained from the Work Experience site, when applicable.

Payment for Work Experience Placement is made when the VR counselor approves a complete, accurate, signed, and dated:

* [VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report;](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html)
* [VR3142 Worksite Agreement for Wage Services – WorkQuest](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) from the Work Experience site, when applicable; and
* invoice.

### 14.3.4 Fees

For more information, refer to [14.5 Work Experience Services Fee Schedule](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-14#s14.5).

## 14.4 Work Experience Training

### 14.4.1 Service Description

Work Experience training services are provided by a Work Experience trainer when a customer needs:

* monitoring to ensure the customer is meeting expectations of the Work Experience site and has the supports and accommodations necessary to be successful; and/or
* more training and support than what is occurring at the Work Experience site.

Training provided by the Work Experience trainer can include:

* teaching skills;
* reinforcing skills;
* establishing and setting up accommodations and/or compensatory techniques to increase the customer's independence and ability to meet the Work Experience site’s expectations; and
* monitoring to ensure the customer’s and the employer’s needs are being met.

Work Experience training occurs after Work Experience Placement services are secured. Work Experience training can be authorized when the customer has a Work Experience site:

* on his or her own;
* with the assistance of a teacher, friend, or family member;
* with the assistance of a Employment Services Provider through Work Experience Placement;
* through the Summer Earn and Learn program; or
* through other programs arranged by VR staff.

When necessary, the Work Experience trainer and the Work Experience specialist can simultaneously work with a customer for up to five hours.

VR cannot pay for a Work Experience training longer than 12 weeks for each Work Experience Placement unless there is a vocational need and the additional training time is approved by a VR Manager. Any request to change the Work Experience Training service description, process and procedure, or the outcomes required for payment must be documented and approved by the VR director, using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) form, before the change is implemented.

### 14.4.2 Process and Procedure

Work Experience training can be authorized for a customer based on the amount of assistance, supervision, and/or monitoring a customer needs to meet a Work Experience site’s expectations. VR counselors determine when Work Experience training is needed and the number of hours to be included in the service authorization.

If Work Experience training is authorized by VR, the [VR1600, Work Experience Referral](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), is completed by the VR counselor and sent to the provider.

The Work Experience site , the customer, the VR counselor, and the Work Experience trainer should be involved in the training plan to identify the goals to be addressed on the VR1600, Work Experience Referral, and the [VR1604, Work Experience Training Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html). The Work Experience trainer can add goals and areas of focus to meet the customer’s needs in consultation with the VR counselor throughout the Work Experience.

The Work Experience trainer records the customer's abilities and challenges as well as observations and recommendations related to the Work Experience training goals on the VR1604, Work Experience Training Report.

The provider must submit a complete and accurate VR1604, Work Experience Training Report, with the invoice. Once the form and invoice have been approved by the VR counselor, the invoice is paid.

### 14.4.3 Outcomes Required for Payment

The Work Experience trainer will:

* address the goals on the [VR1600, Work Experience Referral](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), and any additional goals or focus areas that may be necessary to meet a customer’s individual needs;
* use structured intervention techniques to employ the most effective, but least intrusive, methods possible to help the customer learn and perform the essential soft and hard skills, tasks, or responsibilities of the Work Experience and use transportation to get to and from the Work Experience site, when necessary;
* work with the customer, Work Experience site, and VR staff members to establish the support services, accommodations, compensatory techniques, and training necessary to address barriers and ensure the customer's successful participation in the work experience;
* monitor the customer's performance to foster improvement; and
* gradually reduce the time spent with the customer at the Work Experience site as applicable, when the customer becomes better adjusted and more independent and no longer needs training support or monitoring.

Using the [VR1604, Work Experience Training Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), the Work Experience trainer documents the following in descriptive terms:

* The Work Experience training goals and focus areas as described on the VR1600, Work Experience Referral, and/or any service authorizations
* New goals and focus areas as discussed with the VR counselor
* Log entries of each training session with each entry, including the:
	+ date the service was provided (MM-DD-YY);
	+ start time and end time of each session (hh:mm a.m. or p.m.);
	+ total time of the session using quarter hour (.25) increments (for example, .25 = 15 minutes, .50 = 30 minutes, .75 = 45 minutes, and 1.0 = 60 minutes; use 0 for nonbillable notations);
	+ goal number(s) addressed in the sessions as outlined in the Work Experience Training Goals section of the form;
	+ setting in which the session took place (individual, one-to-one, or group); and
	+ a narrative description of the services provided by the Work Experience trainer and the customer's performance of skills in relation to the customer's goals
* A summary of the customer’s performance for the reporting period

Payment for Work Experience training is made when the VR counselor approves a complete, accurate, signed, and dated:

* [VR1604, Work Experience Training Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html); and
* invoice.

### 14.4.4 Fees

For more information, see [14.6 Work Experience Services Fee Schedule](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-14%22%20%5Cl%20%22s146).

## 14.5 Work Experience Services Fee Schedule

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

#### Work Experience Services

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Services** | **Unit Rate** | **Comment** |
| Work Experience Placement | $750.00 per placement | Can be purchased multiple times for a customer |
| Work Experience Training– Individual | Negotiated, up to $37.50 per hour |  |
| Work Experience Training–Group  | Negotiated, up to $19.00 per hour, per individual | No more than four individuals in a group |