# VR-SFP Chapter 18: Supported Employment Services

The following sections in the VR-SFP have been revised. These requirements are effective on January 15, 2020.

## 18.1 Supported Employment Overview

VR Supported Employment (SE) is a comprehensive service package for VR customers.

VR SE enables customers with the most significant disabilities to enter competitive integrated employment by:

* providing individualized assistance in finding an appropriate job match;
* providing ongoing support services; and
* establishing extended services, sometimes called long-term supports, for the customer to maintain a long-term competitive integrated employment outcome by:
	+ identifying resources to deliver the extended services;
	+ training extended services providers;
	+ confirming that extended services are in place, if needed, to make sure the job is stable; and
	+ ensuring all known needs are met before achievement of SE Benchmark 6, Service Closure.

Refer to [VRSM C-1201: Legal Authorization](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-c-1200%22%20%5Cl%20%22c1201-1) for the definition of competitive integrated employment.

Before paying for VR services, the VR counselor will ensure that the customer is placed in competitive integrated employment. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) emphasizes the term “work unit” in the definition of competitive integrated employment. A work unit may refer to all employees in a job category or to a group of employees working together, depending on the employer's organizational structure (Federal Register Vol.81, at 55643). Individuals with disabilities experience differing levels of integration in various work environments, and those levels are dependent on the circumstances of the job within each work unit of an organization. Therefore, some jobs are considered to be in "integrated locations," and thus satisfy the definition of "competitive integrated employment," while others do not. If an individual with disabilities is placed with an employer that complies with a mandated direct labor-hour ratio of persons with disabilities, before benchmark payments are made, VR staff must complete a competitive integrated employment checklist to determine whether the employment is competitive integrated employment.

The VR Supported Employment Outcome-Based System uses the "Place, Then Train" model of employment placement to place customers in a job and then train them in order to help them find and keep long-term competitive integrated employment.

By being matched to a job first and then receiving ongoing supports and training, the customer develops job-readiness skills while on the job. An employer who hires a VR customer is expected to provide the same training to the VR customer as the employer would provide to other new employees, with help and support from the VR counselor and the SE specialist.

Customized employment practices develop the best job match for the customer, using flexible strategies to meet the individual's needs and the employer's unmet business needs. These practices address the unique skills, interests, abilities, capabilities, and support needs of an individual with a most significant disability. Many times, jobs must be created and/or designed with flexible strategies to allow for a suitable job match.

SE services may be used for customers with any type of disability, but a customer must:

* have a most significant disability (three or more functional limitations);
* require individualized assistance in finding an appropriate job match;
* require ongoing supports to learn the job and establish accommodations; and
* require extended services (long-term supports) to maintain the employment after VR closes the case.

A VR counselor may purchase SE when the customer has a most significant disability and:

* will benefit from the Place, Then Train model of job placement;
* needs extensive comprehensive training and support to compete in the labor market;
* needs ongoing supports to maintain an employment outcome;
* requires considerable help competing in the open job market;
* has not had competitive integrated employment or has experienced interrupted or intermittent employment; or
* is likely to be able to find and keep a competitive integrated job when necessary supports are in place.

Benchmark outcome payments are made when the provider achieves the outcomes required for each benchmark. Each benchmark is paid only once for each customer between Active Status (customer has an IPE) and Closure Status of a VR case.

The customer's job must:

* be full-time or part-time based on customer choice;
* exist in a competitive, integrated work setting; and
* be permanent, not temporary.

If a business hires a customer in a temp-to-hire position, the job is acceptable if not considered short-term or project specific employment that will end upon completion of the project. Pro re nata (PRN) or “as needed” employment is allowed, as long as the customer can achieve all employment conditions outlined on theVR1642. VR will not accept temporary seasonal employment placements. Temporary seasonal employment pertains to labor performed at certain seasons or periods of the year and which may not be continuous or carried out throughout the year.

VR pays for Supported Employment only if the customer is placed with an organization or business that is not owned, operated, controlled, or governed by the service provider providing the job placement service. Service providers that are state agencies, state universities, or facilities that are a part of a state university system are exempt from this requirement.

When a customer obtains a new position with the current employer or begins a new job with another employer, an updated [VR1643, Supported Employment Services Plan 2, Placement, Job Analysis, & Training Plan (SESP-2)](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), must be submitted to reflect the new position.

SE services may not exceed 24 months. Services may be extended if the customer needs additional time to reach job stabilization. [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), must be completed and submitted for approval if a customer's SE services will be provided for longer than 24 months. If an extension is granted, the SE provider receives a copy of the approved VR3472, and the VR counselor issues a new service authorization and sends it to the provider. The VR counselor and the customer must agree to extend services and document the approved extension in the customer's individualized plan for employment (IPE).

SE services must include ongoing support services, such as:

* social skills training;
* job skills training;
* observation of customer performance;
* setting up or training individuals who are the customer's natural supports or extended service providers; and
* setting up accommodations at the work site.

Ongoing support services must be provided at least twice monthly to monitor the customer at the work site and, as necessary, off-site to ensure the customer maintains successful competitive integrated employment. If under specific circumstances, especially at the request of the customer and with approval from the VR counselor, the required monitoring meetings may take place off-site, and must occur at least twice monthly. If off-site monitoring is determined to be appropriate, at least one contact with the employer each month is required.

The following VR services may not be purchased while a customer is receiving SE services from an Employment Services Provider:

* Job Development
* Bundled Job Placement
* Job Skills Training
* Non-bundled Job Placement
* On-the-Job Training (OJT)
* Personal Social Adjustment Training (PSAT)
* Vocational Adjustment Training (VAT)
* Environmental Work Assessment
* Vocational Evaluation
* Work Adjustment Training (WAT)
* Work Experience Services (WE)

## 18.2 Staff Qualifications

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## 18.3 Supported Employment Services

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### 18.3.8 Extended Services

Extended Services assist customers in maintaining long-term employment after intensive ongoing supports and training have achieved stabilization of the customer’s employment. Extended Services can be provided either at the employment site or off-site when necessary to maintain employment. Examples of Extended Services include, but are not limited to:

* job skills training to assist with development of soft and hard skills to ensure the customer is meeting the expectation of the employer;
* transportation;
* Social Security income reporting;
* medication management;
* assistance with dressing or toileting; and/or
* managing the customer’s work schedule.

VR counselors coordinate the provision of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) funding for long-term support services. HHS contracted providers may provide Extended Services for a customer at achievement of Benchmark 5: Job Stability, through Home and Community Based Services Waivers Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS), Community First Choice (CFC),Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Home and Community-Based Service (HCS), Texas Home Living (TxHmL), Deaf Blind with Multiple Disabilities (DBMD), and STAR+PLUS and STAR Kids waivers. Supported Employment Specialist coordinates with and trains all Extended Service providers before a case achieves Benchmark 5: Job Stability.

#### Youth with Disabilities

VR can provide Extended Services to VR customers who are youth with disabilities for up to four years or until the youth reaches age of 25 and no longer meets the definition of a “youth with a disability,” whichever occurs first. See the glossary for the definition of “youth with disabilities.”

Job Skills Training is how TWS-VR purchases Extended Service for a customer when all other available resources for Extended Services, such as Medicaid Waiver Programs, natural supports, other public agencies, and/or private nonprofit organizations are not available to the customer.

For information on how Job Skills Training can be used as an Extended Service refer to VR-SFP Chapter 17, section 17.5.1.1 Purchasing Job Skills Training for Extended Services for Youth with Disabilities.

## 18.4 Benchmark 1A: Supported Employment Assessment and Supported Employment Assessment Review Meeting

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## 18.8 Benchmark 4: Eight-Week Job Maintenance

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### 18.8.3 Outcomes Required for Payment

Payment for Benchmark 4 is made when the VR counselor approves a complete, accurate, and signed:

* [VR1645, Supported Employment Training and Progress Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), for the 56th cumulative day of employment, listing the progress and/or achievement of identified goals, contacts and services provided, employer contacts, and identified extended services; employment conditions; targeted job tasks; extended services; and hours worked by the customer, with signatures to confirm meeting:
	+ 100 percent of nonnegotiable employment conditions;
	+ at least 50 percent or more of negotiable employment conditions; and
	+ at least one targeted job task listed on the current VR1642, Supported Employment Services Plan 1 (SESP1);
* [VR1644, Supported Employment Services, Time Tracking Log](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html); and
* invoice.

The customer must maintain employment for a minimum of 56 cumulative days, without a break of seven days or more and is consistent with the requirements of the [VR1642, Supported Employment Service Plan – 1 (SESP-1)](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) that 100 percent of the nonnegotiable conditions and at least 50 percent of the negotiable conditions were met, and at least one job task listed on the VR1642 was accomplished.

The SE specialist must have at least two contacts per month with the customer.

The SE specialist monitors, arranges, and/or provides:

* short-term supports;
* long-term supports;
* training; and
* accommodations.

The completed [VR1645, Supported Employment Training and Progress Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), describes customer's identified goals and the training supports and accommodations used to assist the customer in maintaining competitive integrated employment. The SE specialist or job skills trainer documents the goals and focus areas in descriptive terms. Goals and focus areas may include, but are not limited to:

* challenges the customer encountered while meeting the employer's expectations;
* training, strategies, support needs, and accommodations that were identified in the [VR1643, Supported Employment Services Plan 2, Placement, Job Analysis, & Training Plan (SESP-2)](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), and addressed during the benchmark's reporting period;
* plans to address—before job stability—outstanding training, supports, and accommodation needs;
* the SE specialist's and the job skills trainer's roles in the setup, delivery, or monitoring of services designed to help the customer meet the employer's expectations;
* the customer's and, if applicable, the customer's legal representative's level of satisfaction with the job and the work environment;
* the training the employer provided for the customer; and
* verification of customer employment for eight weeks (56 cumulative days), working at least one day in each week and without a break of a full workweek as defined by the employer for reasons such as illness, injury, vacation, or short-term disability.

The SE specialist records the customer's status at the 56th cumulative day of employment on the VR1645, listing any identified extended services. The VR1644, Supported Employment Services, Time Tracking Log, indicating the dates and hours worked is also completed by the SE specialist.

The information documented in the VR1645 must be unique and individualized for each customer. VR contacts the customer, customer's representative (if applicable), or employer to verify the information on the VR1644 and VR1645 is accurate.

### 18.8.4 Fees

For information about fees, see 18.11 Supported Employment Fee Schedule.

## 18.9 Benchmark 5: Job Stability

### 18.9.1 Service Description

Benchmark 5 is achieved when the customer:

* maintains employment for 56 days or more;
* meets 100 percent of the nonnegotiable conditions on the [VR1642, Supported Employment Service Plan – 1 (SESP-1)](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html);
* meets at least 50 percent or more of the negotiable conditions on the VR1642;
* performs at least one job task on the VR1642;
* meets or exceeds the employer's performance expectations;
* has in place all Extended Services and supports, as identified on the VR1646, such as Supported Employment Services, Job Stability Report, or that have emerged, such as:
	+ the customer's LTSS; or
	+ alternate funding, agencies, or individuals established to provide Extended Services for the customer; and
* attends a job stability meeting with the customer, his/her representative, if any, the SE, and VR counselor, and all agree the customer has achieved job stability. Extended service providers are invited to attend, but their attendance is not mandatory.

The Extended Services and long-term support identified on the [VR1646, Supported Employment Services, Job Stability Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), must be in place and working effectively before the VR counselor can determine whether the customer is stable in the job.

The employment service provider providing the Extended Services sponsored by TWC-VR for youth with disabilities must be identified on VR1646 as an Extended Services provider.

The customer must achieve Supported Employment Job Stability status, before VR can purchase Job Skills Training for Extended Services. Extended Services may be purchased simultaneously with the Supported Employment Benchmark 6: Case Closure.

If the customer finds a new position, a new job, or requires additional supports from the SE specialist or job skills trainer, at least 30 cumulative days of employment must occur before job stability is reestablished.

### 18.9.2 Process and Procedure

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## 18.10 Benchmark 6: Service Closure

### 18.10.1 Service Description

Benchmark 6 is achieved when the customer:

* is employed in a job for at least 146 days;
* completes 90 cumulative days of employment stability from the final job stability date;
* performs at least one job task on the [VR1642, Supported Employment Service Plan – 1 (SESP-1)](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html);
* meets 100 percent of the nonnegotiable conditions on VR1642;
* meets at least 50 percent or more of the negotiable conditions on VR1642;
* meets or exceeds the employer's expectations; and
* is satisfied along with his or her representative, if any, with the job placement and the establishment of Extended Services and support.

Additionally, all Extended Services and support identified on the [VR1646, Supported Employment Services, Job Stability Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), must be in place and working.

The SE specialist and the job skills trainer must not have provided any direct services for or on behalf of the customer, such as training the employer or Extended Service providers, after the job stability date has been set. The only exception is for youth with disabilities when VR has agreed to sponsor Extended Services because no other resource is available. Extended Services may be purchased simultaneously with the Supported Employment Benchmark 6: Case Closure for youth with disabilities when VR is purchasing Extended Services as identified on the IPE.

At Benchmark 6: Service Closure, the Extended Service providers, employer, and other supports must be in place and providing the necessary supports as defined on the VR1646, and must be documented on the [VR1647, Supported Employment Closure Summary](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html).

### 18.10.2 Process and Procedure

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