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# VRSM C-400: Training Services

## College or University and Career and Technical Training

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## Introduction to Training Services

A full range of reasonable and necessary training services is available to eligible vocational rehabilitation (VR) customers when these services are necessary to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain the employment goal that is identified on the customer's individualized plan for employment (IPE). When considering providing support for training services, VR must apply:

* Best value
* Use of comparable benefits
* Required customer participation in cost of services (also referred to as BLR)
* Separation of duties, and
* Ethics and purchasing.

For more information refer to D-203: Purchasing Decisions.

## C-401 Legal Authorization

34 CFR §361.48(b) (6)

"(b) Services for individuals who have applied for or been determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. As appropriate to the vocational rehabilitation needs of each individual and consistent with each individual's individualized plan for employment, the designated State unit must ensure that the following vocational rehabilitation services are available to assist the individual with a disability in preparing for, securing, retaining, advancing in or regaining an employment outcome that is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice: ….

(6) Vocational and other training services, including personal and vocational adjustment training, advanced training in, but not limited to, a field of science, technology, engineering, mathematics (including computer science), medicine, law, or business); books, tools, and other training materials, except that no training or training services in an institution of higher education (universities, colleges, community or junior colleges, vocational schools, technical institutes, or hospital schools of nursing or any other postsecondary education institution) may be paid for with funds under this part unless maximum efforts have been made by the State unit and the individual to secure grant assistance in whole or in part from other sources to pay for that training.”

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Vocational Rehabilitation Services Rule §856.45:

“(a) VRD purchases vocational and other training services for customers who require additional knowledge or skills to enter employment consistent with their aptitudes and ability, and compatible with their physical or mental impairments.

(b) VRD purchases vocational and other training services through an appropriate facility. These facilities include accredited colleges and universities, certified public or private businesses, technical and vocational schools, on-the-job training, correspondence course training, tutorial training, and community rehabilitation program training.

(c) Academic training in institutions of higher education (universities, colleges, community or junior colleges, vocational schools, technical institutes, or hospital schools of nursing) is subject to the following:

(1) Academic training in vocational schools and technical institutes must be provided only in schools that are certified by the State of Texas.

(2) No vocational rehabilitation funds may be used to pay for academic training unless VRD and the customer have made maximum efforts to secure grant assistance in whole or in part from other sources to pay for the training.

(3) The PELL grant, like any other comparable services and benefits, must be applied to the educational process before the expenditure of VRD funds for services under this section. Services must not be denied pending receipt of a PELL grant, but must be contingent upon the customer's making application if eligible.

(4) Academic training must be provided through public, tax-supported colleges and universities in Texas unless:

(A) a specific curriculum related to the customer's academic major is not available at a Texas public institution;

(B) academic training elsewhere is determined to be more economical; or

(C) academic training elsewhere provides specialized services needed by the customer.

(5) If the customer chooses to obtain academic training at a private college or university in Texas or at a college or university outside Texas and the provisions in paragraph (4) of this subsection do not apply, academic support must be limited to that which the customer would receive if he or she attended a state-supported college or university in Texas.

(6) A customer who is blind, does not meet the residency requirements of a particular institution, and is not eligible for tuition exemption under Texas Education Code (TEC) §54.364 may receive VRD tuition assistance based on the customer's economic need, but the payments must not exceed the tuition paid for a customer who does meet the residency requirements.

(7) Tuition and fee exemption is an exemption from payment of tuition and/or required fees normally charged by a state-supported college or university. Required fees include student services, building use, health center use, lab fees, and property deposits not reimbursable to the student. Required fees do not include optional fees.

(8) Any equipment purchased for the customer during academic training must be needed by the customer to help maintain academic success so that the customer can meet the employment outcome.

(9) Academic training does not include continuing education required for maintaining certification in a field in which the customer is already gainfully employed.

(10) Once admitted to academic training:

(A) the customer must maintain and complete a full-time course load as defined by the college or university. This requirement may be waived if:

1. the customer is a graduating senior;
2. the customer is an incoming freshman (first two semesters or quarters);
3. the customer is a returning adult (first academic year only);
4. the customer is in summer school; or
5. other extenuating circumstances prevent the customer from participating in a full-time course load; and

(B) the customer is required to meet with the VR counselor at least once each semester, to submit add or drop slips as changes occur, and to provide grade slips or transcripts to the VR counselor at the end of each semester.

(d) VRD requires that each customer who is provided with vocational or other training services by VRD apply for financial assistance where reasonably available. This assistance can include federal, state, or local grants-in-aid and private scholarships where applicable. If the customer has not done so before the time of application for vocational rehabilitation services, the VR counselor assists the customer in doing so.

(e) VRD does not pay tuition and fees to a business, technical, or vocational school in excess of the published fees.

## C-402 Types of Training Services

VR services are available in several ranges and training environments. Additionally, many levels of trainings are available to serve the needs and abilities of VR customers.

### C-402-1 Range of Services

The range of training services include the following:

* Academic training
* Vocational training and technical training
* Credential specific training
* Work Readiness
* Apprenticeship opportunities
* Work Experience
* Project Search
* Adult Basic Education
* Texas Confidence Builders

### C-402-2 Training Environments

Approved training environments include the following:

* Community colleges
* State colleges
* Technical colleges
* Public universities
* Health-related institutions
* Private postsecondary institutions
* On-the-job and registered apprenticeship sites
* Specialized training providers that are approved by Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWC VR)

The Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center is also an approved training institution. For more information, refer to the [Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center Policy Manual](https://twc.texas.gov/manuals/ccrc/default.htm).

### C-402-3 Levels of Training

Various levels of training are available, including the following:

* Secondary school diploma
* Secondary school equivalency
* Certificate of successfully completed individualized education plan
* Work readiness
* Vocational adjustment
* Skill-specific training
* Training-specific credentials
* Certificate
* Associate's degree
* Bachelor's degree
* Master's degree
* Doctorate

The VR counselor can consider advanced training in science; technology; engineering; mathematics, including computer science (also referred to as STEM occupations); medicine; law; or business as well as other fields in which there is a specific vocational outcome that requires an advanced degree when the customer can meet minimum standards to be accepted in the program.

VR is the payor of last resort, see C-411-1: Payer of Last Resort.

## C-403 Computerized Criminal History Search for Training

When participation in training or eligibility for a license and/or employment in an occupation requires that the customer pass a computerized criminal history (CCH) search, the CCH must be performed before including the training or employment in the customer's IPE. For more information about CCHs, refer to [B-405 Computerized Criminal History Checks](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-400#b405).

VR cannot support an IPE goal or related services when the customer does not meet the legal requirements of the associated employment outcome.

## C-404 VR Counselor Responsibilities

The VR counselor provides ongoing support through regular counseling, guidance, and help with coordinating access to necessary supports throughout the life of the case. This can include assisting the customer in applying for other types of assistance such as federal aid.

### C-404-1 Counseling and Guidance for Training Participants

The VR counselor must provide counseling and guidance that emphasizes the importance of the customer's participation in and commitment to successful completion of training and the achievement of the employment outcome.

Counseling and guidance for training participants are provided, at a minimum:

* before the beginning of any training period;
* once during each semester or training period (to check the customer's progress); and
* at the end of each semester or training period (to check grades and to plan for the next semester or training period).

When appropriate, VR counselors provide counseling and guidance on opportunities for advanced training in a science, technology, engineering, mathematics, computer science, medical, legal, and business occupations. (Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics are referred to as "STEM" occupations.)

For more information about counseling and guidance requirements, refer to [C-100 Counseling and Guidance](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-c-100).

As part of the counseling and guidance process, VR counselors provide information on available information, resources, and supports that will help the customer make an informed choice and succeed in services. For more information refer to [D-203-1 Informed Customer Choice](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d203-1).

### C-404-2 Informed Choice and Training Services

When there is an expressed desire or need for the customer to participate in training services to reach an identified vocational goal, the VR counselor works with the customer through the process of informed choice to explore a variety of options. This must be documented clearly in a case note or series of case notes in RHW as part of the assessing and planning process to complete the comprehensive assessment. For more information on roles and responsibilities in this process, refer to B-102: Informed Choice.

### C-404-3 Evaluating Training Progress

Each semester or training period, the VR counselor reviews the following, as appropriate:

* The customer’s grades or progress report, but does not delay services when grades cannot be obtained before registration for the next semester or grading period
* The customer’s degree plan and the progress made to reach the training goal
* Financial aid and tuition bill
* All courses the customer plans to take during the next semester or training period to ensure they are a part of the customer's required coursework.

The customer must maintain satisfactory training progress as defined in C-405-3 Satisfactory Training Progress. If the customer struggles to maintain satisfactory training progress, the VR counselor reviews the customer's use of available resources and supports, such as tutoring, accommodations, and assistive technology, to see if the customer could improve the use of available resources and supports.

## C-405 Customer Responsibilities

Successful completion of training requires active involvement by the customer in all aspects of the VR service and training. This includes:

* providing all required documentation;
* completing all admission and registration procedures required by the training institution;
* maintaining satisfactory training progress, as defined by the training institution; and
* maintaining satisfactory progress with VR services as defined in the customer's IPE.

VR requires that each customer who is provided with training services apply for available financial assistance such as federal, state, or local grants and private scholarships.

A service authorization is the only valid means by which VR can authorize goods and services with VR funds. For more information on purchasing services and procedures, refer to [D-204 The Purchasing Process](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d204).

### C-405-1 Required Documents

A customer who is participating in training must provide the VR counselor with the following documentation, which is kept in the customer's paper case file:

* Verification of application for available financial aid
* Verification of financial aid award
* A copy of the individualized degree plan or comparable documentation as provided by the training institution
* A course schedule for each training period
* A copy of grades for each training period
* Written documentation of added and dropped courses
* Written justification for a change in the major course study
* A copy of the appropriate certificate of completion or copy of transcript noting degree completed for sponsored training (for example, certification, licensure, or degree)

When a course of study is changed more than twice, approval from the VR Manager is required before VR continues sponsorship of costs associated with training.

### C-405-2 Participation in VR Services and Training

The following information is based on the Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation Services Rule §856.45. No exceptions other than those described below can be made to the following policies and procedures.

To demonstrate customer participation in VR services, the customer must:

* enroll in courses and electives that are included in the institution-approved degree or training plan;
* contact the VR counselor before adding or dropping classes this includes taking an incomplete for a course. If the course schedule is changed, then payments for reader services, books, tools, supplies, transportation, room and board, and other supports must be recalculated;
* maintain and complete a full-time course load as defined by the training institution, unless the VR Supervisor has granted an exception to this requirement.
* The VR Supervisor can grant an exception only when the customer is:
* a graduating senior (from a college or university);
* an incoming freshman (first two semesters or quarters);
* a returning adult student (first academic year only);
* attending summer school; or
* subject to other documented extenuating circumstances, such as disability-specific limitations, that prevent the customer from participating in a full-time course load;
* communicate with the VR counselor, teachers, and the training provider's disability office about problems or accommodation needs;
* use the services and supports that are available through the training provider's disability office, as needed;
* maintain consistent enrollment and attendance in regular semesters; and
* maintain satisfactory progress, as defined in C-405-3 Satisfactory Training Progress.

### C-405-3 Satisfactory Training Progress

Satisfactory training progress is defined by the training provider and included on the customer's IPE. The customer must meet satisfactory training progress requirements for each semester or grading period to receive VR funding for subsequent semesters or grading periods.

The VR counselor can make exceptions to this requirement for no more than one semester or grading period and on a case-by-case basis if justification for the exception is documented clearly in a case note. If a customer fails to meet satisfactory training progress for two or more consecutive semesters or grading periods, the VR Manager must review and approve continuing with, or resuming, training and related services or supports.

## C-406 Training at a College or University

Customers can attend an accredited public or private (independent) college or university and earn a certificate or an associate's, bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree when the customer can meet minimum standards to be accepted in the program.

### C-406-1 Assessment for Training at a College or University

Customers must meet the minimum standards for acceptance to a college or university that is sponsored by VR; the college or university must be identified as the provider for the service in the customer’s IPE or IPE amendment.

Before completing the IPE, the VR counselor assesses the customer's potential to benefit from and successfully complete academic training. The assessment includes a review of the customer's:

* previous academic achievements (grades, degrees, and certificates);
* existing or new cognitive evaluations;
* need for, or history of, remedial classes;
* independent living skills;
* ability to manage the related time demands;
* need for assistive technology or accommodations in a training environment; and
* need for non-VR supports for participation.

For more information about completing the comprehensive assessment, refer to [B-400 Completing the Comprehensive Assessment](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-400).

#### Private or Out-of-State Colleges or Universities

Training must be provided through public colleges and universities in Texas unless:

* a specific curriculum related to the customer's course of study is not available at a Texas public institution;
* academic training elsewhere is determined to be more economical, after all costs are considered; or
* academic training elsewhere provides specialized services needed by the customer that are not available at a Texas public institution.

Tuition and fees paid by VR cannot exceed in-state tuition and fees. For more information refer to C-412 Maximum Payment for a Training at a College or University.

For approval requirements see [D-206-3 Out-of-State Purchases](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d206-3) and C-412-4 Private or Out-of-State for College or University Training.

#### Evaluating Previous Training Performance

If the customer's history includes a record of marginal or poor performance in previous training, before committing to a full training program in the customer's IPE, the VR counselor should consider obtaining additional diagnostic evaluations or other types of assessments, if comparable documentation is not available, to develop a remedial plan and determine whether the customer is likely to be successful (with supports).

Examples of poor training performance include:

* excessive and/or repetitive class withdrawals or drops;
* poor attendance; and
* failing grades.

### C-406-2 Developmental Courses at a College or University

If a customer requires developmental courses (sometimes called remedial courses) to strengthen academic skills, the VR counselor must consider best value and other comparable benefits to provide this training, including:

* adult basic education programs;
* special training;
* tutorial programs; and/or
* developmental courses provided at no cost.

If comparable benefits are unavailable or impractical, VR can pay for developmental courses for a maximum of two semesters or grading periods.

### C-406-3 Content of an IPE for Training at a College or University

In addition to the requirements identified in [B-500 Individualized Plan for Employment](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-500), an IPE that includes training services must also include:

* an employment goal that is directly associated with the sponsored training;
* the specific definition of satisfactory progress such as minimum grades requirements and attendance;
* the credit hours required for each semester or grading period;
* statements of specific customer and VR responsibilities; and
* a statement about the requirement to apply available federal financial aid (for example, the Pell Grant and other funding that does not require repayment) to the cost of training before VR funds are authorized.

The IPE must be written for the entire length of the agreed-upon training at the college or university and can be amended throughout the life of the case.

#### Admission and Registration Procedures

The customer must complete all admission and registration procedures required by the college or university. The customer completes as much as possible, with VR staff providing only minimal coaching and prompting. When needed, the level of coaching and prompting to complete these tasks should be individualized, based on the customer's unique needs and circumstances.

### C-406-4 Required Time Frames for Completion of Training at a College or University

VR customers are expected to complete VR-sponsored training within a reasonable time and in accordance with their college or university degree plan.

VR sponsorship of academic training that exceeds the following time frames requires VR Manager approval as soon as it is apparent that the following time frames will be exceeded:

* An associate's degree (generally 60 credit hours) must be completed within three years.
* A bachelor's degree (generally 120 credit hours) must be completed within six years (including credit hours from a junior college or community college).
* A master's degree must be completed within three years. (This does not include time to complete bachelor's degree before beginning the master's degree program.)

Timeframes for a doctoral degree level training varies. Documentation must show that the customer is participating at a full-time status.

#### Prorated Time Frames

When a customer has spent time in a college or university before VR sponsorship, the VR counselor must consider the credit hours already earned that apply to the current degree plan. The required timeframes for completion are then based on the institution degree plan that must be based on full time enrolment. The VR counselor documents the justification for the prorated time frame in a case note in ReHabWorks (RHW) and includes the agreed-upon time frame in the customer's IPE or IPE amendment.

## C-407 Training from Career and Technical or Certified Schools (Proprietary Institutions)

Career and technical or certification schools (proprietary institutions), including correspondence and internet courses, must:

* have been reviewed by the appropriate licensing entity;
* offer approved curricula; and
* hold a license to operate a career school or college.

Proprietary schools must be licensed or certified by TWC or another regulatory agency such as, Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation. To find a list of TWC licensed schools, go to <https://apps.twc.state.tx.us/CSC/directory/search.do>. To find a list of certified schools, go to the [Eligible Training Provider System](https://apps.twc.state.tx.us/PROVIDERCERT/dispatcher?link=HREF&pageid=APP_HOME).

TWC can grant exemptions from licensing under TEC Chapter 132, which governs career schools and colleges. For instructions on the exemption process see C-409 Training by Paid Instructor.

### C-407-1: Assessment for Training at a Proprietary Institution

Customers must meet the minimum standards for acceptance to a proprietary institution that is sponsored by VR and included in the customer's IPE.

Before completing the IPE, the VR counselor assesses the customer's potential to benefit from and successfully complete training. The assessment includes a review of the customer's:

* previous academic achievements (grades, degrees, and certificates);
* existing or new cognitive evaluations;
* ability to manage the related time demands;
* need for assistive technology or accommodations in a training environment; and
* need for non-VR supports for participation.

For more information about completing the comprehensive assessment, refer to [B-400 Completing the Comprehensive Assessment](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-400).

#### Out-of-State Proprietary Institutions

Out-of-state proprietary institution that provide training to a customer must meet all the following criteria:

* The institution must be legally authorized by the state of its physical location to offer postsecondary education and award degrees.
* The institution must be accredited by a regional or national accrediting organization recognized by the US Secretary of Education under the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 USC §1001 et seq.).
* The institution must offer in Texas only postsecondary distance or correspondence programs of instruction. (That is, there is no physical location in Texas.)

If the institution meets the criteria listed above, it must take the actions listed at the following website: <https://twc.texas.gov/partners/out-state-distance-education-institutions>. Open the [TWC Requirements You Must Meet](https://twc.texas.gov/partners/out-state-distance-education-institutions#twcRequirementsYouMustMeet) link.

If the institution does not meet all the criteria, an explanation of both TWC’s licensing and exemption processes is contained at the following website: [http://www.texasworkforce.org/careerschools](https://twc.texas.gov/partners/career-schools-colleges-resources). Open the [Apply for a certificate of approval](https://twc.texas.gov/partners/applying-career-school-or-college-license) link.

Tuition and fees rates paid by VR cannot exceed maximum payment rates; when training is obtained in another state, payment is governed by the policies and procedures outlined in C-413: Maximum Payment for Training at a Propriety Institution.

### C-407-2: Content of a IPE for Training at a Proprietary Institution

In addition to the requirement identified in [B-500 Individualized Plan for Employment](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-500), an IPE that includes training services must also include:

* an employment goal that is directly associated with the sponsored training;
* the definition of “satisfactory progress”;
* the hours required for each semester or grading period;
* statements of specific customer and VR responsibilities; and
* a statement about the requirement to apply available federal financial aid (for example, the Pell Grant and other funding that does not require repayment) to the cost of training before VR funds are authorized.

The IPE must be written for the entire length of the agreed-upon training at the institution and can be amended throughout the life of the case.

#### Satisfactory Attendance and Progress

Customers attending a proprietary institution must meet the institution's requirements for attendance, progress, and grades for each grading period.

For more information on requirements, refer to C-405-3 Satisfactory Training Progress.

### C-407-3 Required Time Frames of Proprietary Institutions

When a student is enrolled full time, VR sponsorship of training through a proprietary institution must be completed within the time frames established by the institution for full-time enrollment.

Training that exceeds time frames for completion requires approval from a VR Supervisor before further training will be sponsored with VR funds.

#### Prorated Time Frames

When a customer has spent time in a training at a proprietary institution before VR sponsorship, the VR counselor must consider the credit already earned that apply to the current curriculum and adjust the required timeframes for completion of the approved program. The required timeframes for completion are then based full time enrolment. The VR counselor documents the justification for the prorated time frame in a case note in ReHabWorks (RHW) and includes the agreed-upon time frame in the customer's IPE or IPE amendment.

## C-408 Correspondence and Distance Learning Courses

Customers taking online, correspondence, or distance-learning courses from a college, university, or proprietary institution must meet the same requirements established for classroom courses at that institution. See C-412 Maximum Payment for a Training at a College or University and C-413 Maximum Payment for Training at a Propriety Institution.

## C-409 Training by Paid Instructor or Exempt Schools

Training by a paid instructor or school exempt from the TWC licensing requirement to meet a customer's individualized needs can be purchased with VR funds. For assessment considerations, content of an IPE, and required time frames refer to C-407 Training from Career and Technical or Certified Schools (Proprietary Institutions).

### C-409-1 Legal Authorization

TEC §132.002(b) states:

“Schools offering a course or courses of special study or instruction financed or subsidized by local, state, or federal funds or by any person, firm, association, or agency other than the student involved, on a contract basis and having a closed enrollment, may apply to the commission [TWC] for exemption of such course or courses from this chapter [TEC—Chapter 132] and such course or courses may be declared exempt by the commission where the commission finds the course or courses to be outside the purview of this chapter.”

### C-409-2 Arranging for a Paid Instructor or Exempt School

The VR counselor arranges for paid-instructor training so that a customer has a chance to learn a specific work skill from a qualified individual. This training can be:

* customized to the customer’s needs (for example, one-on-one);
* offered in a small-group setting; or
* through a school that has a TEC §132.002(b) exemption (see 407-1 Out of State Proprietary Institutions).

#### Instructor Qualifications

The trainer and the course must be:

* approved by TWC; or
* specifically exempted in writing by TWC, based on TEC §132.002(b).

Per TWC regulation, all vocational training providers that charge a fee, including individuals that provide training, are defined as “schools.”

VR staff must forward, through the appropriate chain of management to the VR Field Services Delivery director, all requests for approval to use a school that has the TEC §132.002(b) exemption. This approval is granted individually and is not a blanket approval for an unlicensed school.

#### Fees

When training is obtained through a paid instructor, tuition and fees rates paid by VR must not exceed payment rates that are governed by the policies and procedures outlined in C-413 Maximum Payment for Training at a Propriety Institution.

## C-410 Financial Aid and Comparable Benefits

Comparable benefits and required customer participation in the cost of services must be applied to the cost of all training services before VR funds are used.

The customer must contact the school and apply for financial aid. No VR funds can be used to pay for training unless VR and the customer have made maximum efforts to secure grants and/or other assistance to pay for the training. Verification of application for financial aid must be included in customer's case file.

The following comparable benefits options can be selected to document the use of comparable benefits when service records, IPEs, and Closure Services pages are developed in RHW:

* Disability services offices on college and university campuses
* Educational service center
* Federal student aid (such as Pell Grants, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOP), and work-study)
* Intellectual and developmental disabilities agencies
* Other state agencies
* Other VR state agencies
* Scholarship
* Tuition waiver (non-blind, non-deaf)
* Tuition waiver–Blind
* Tuition waiver–Deaf
* Tuition waiver–Foster Care
* Veteran's Administration
* Waiver programs—MDCP In-Home, CLASS & Family Support Class
* Other entitlement programs

For more information, refer to [D-203-3 Use of Comparable Services and Benefits](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d203-3), C-410-2 Pell Grant, and [D-203-4 Customer Participation in the Cost of Services](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d203-4).

### C-410-1 Free Application for Federal Student Aid

The [Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)](https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa) is a form that can be prepared annually by current and prospective students (undergraduate and graduate) in the United States to determine eligibility for student financial aid. All customers must complete the FAFSA. If the institution does not accept federal financial aid the customer must complete the institutions financial aid application to receive VR funds for training and related expenses.

### C-410-2 Pell Grant

The Pell Grant and other comparable benefits must be applied to the cost of tuition, fees, and other educational expenses before any VR funds can be used. If the Pell Grant is greater than the tuition and fees owed by the customer, the remaining funds should be applied to the cost of other educational expenses, such as books, supplies, room and board, and transportation, under the terms of the grant.

Student financial assistance, such as a loan that requires repayment or scholarships that are not based on student income, are excluded from the financial aid requirement.

### C-410-3 Defaulted Student Loans

If the student has defaulted on a Guaranteed Student Loan, the student is denied a Pell Grant and other forms of financial aid. Before receiving VR funds for training, the customer must:

* initiate the process of getting the loan out of default; and
* provide written documentation, such as copies of correspondence, to confirm that they have initiated this process.

For more information, refer to The Federal Student Aid website link for “[Getting Out of Default](https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/repay-loans/default/get-out).”

### C-410-4 Tuition and Fee Waivers

Students who are eligible for a tuition waiver are exempt from paying tuition and fees for any state-supported college or university in Texas. A waiver includes exemption from all required fees and charges, except for:

* fees or charges for lodging;
* costs of boarding and/or clothing; and
* refundable deposits.

For more information about these tuition waivers, refer to [College for All Texans: Financial Aid](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/apps/financialaid/tofa.cfm?Kind=W).

The 62nd Texas Legislature, Regular Session (1971), established the tuition waiver (also referred to as "tuition exemption") program to help Texas residents who are deaf or blind to receive the benefits of higher education in publicly funded colleges and universities. For more information about these tuition waivers, refer to [College for All Texans: Types of Financial Aid—Exemptions—Blind/Deaf Student Exemption Program](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/apps/financialaid/tofa2.cfm?ID=547) and refer to the additional details below.

### C-410-5: Deafness Tuition and Fee Exemption

Customers who are severely hard of hearing or deaf who request academic training must:

* be referred to the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Office for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS); and
* complete HHSC [Form 3900, Application for Certificate of Deafness for Tuition Waiver](https://hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/laws-regulations/forms/3900/3900.pdf).

For more information, go to [Texas Health and Human Services Deaf and Hard of Hearing](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-and-hard-hearing).

### C-410-6 Blindness Tuition and Fee Exemption

Individuals who are legally or totally blind and meet residency requirements for the college or university are exempt from paying tuition and fees for state-supported colleges and universities in Texas. An individual does not have to be a VR customer to receive a tuition and fee exemption.

The VR counselor provides the individual with a copy of [VR3119, Certification of Blindness](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/gl/html/vocational_rehab_forms.html), certifying that the individual is legally or totally blind.

A completed VR3119, Certification of Blindness, is distributed as follows:

* The original is given to the customer; and
* A copy is placed in the appropriate file (the customer’s VR file or the college-tuition-exempt file for non-VR customers).

It is the individual requesting the waiver responsibility to:

* submit documentation of blindness to VR;
* submit a Certificate of Blindness to the educational institution;
* provide proof that he or she meets the institution’s entrance requirements; and
* follow the institution’s procedures regarding tuition exemption.

If the individual is a VR customer, the information should be readily available in the customer’s case file.

To meet the eligibility for tuition exemption as indicated in TEC §54.205, the individual must:

* be a resident of Texas as defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board;
* be a high school graduate or have received a GED;
* present a letter of recommendation from the principal of the high school attended, from a public official, or from another responsible person who knows the blind individual; and
* present a self-written statement that:
* explains his or her purpose in pursuing higher education; and
* indicates the certificate or degree program to be pursued, or the professional enhancement anticipated from the course of study for that certificate or degree program.

If a VR customer is legally or totally blind but is not eligible for tuition exemption because he or she does not meet the state-supported school’s residency requirements, VR can pay for tuition and fees at a public in-state college or university, not to exceed the Texas-resident tuition rate.

If the individual is not a VR customer, the individual must present visual diagnostic information in person or by mail, confirming legal or total blindness.

Eye exams from an optometrist, an ophthalmologist, or a low-vision specialist meet this requirement. VR does not pay for a diagnostic exam for the sole purpose of obtaining this record. The VR counselor does not use a medical consultant if medical records do not clearly document legal blindness.

It is recommended that the VR counselor meet with the individual in person so that the VR counselor can determine whether the individual needs other VR services. Travel funds are not authorized solely for certification for tuition exemption.

## C-411 Purchasing Training Services from a College, University, or Proprietary Institution

A service authorization (SA) is the only valid means by which VR can authorize the purchase of goods and services on behalf of VR customers.

Use of a service authorization ensures that the:

* required approvals and consultations have been obtained;
* appropriate funds have been encumbered;
* necessary contracts are included, when applicable; and
* additional instructions, guidance, and other necessary information is given to the provider.

For general information about policies and procedures for purchasing all goods and services, refer to D-200 Purchasing Goods and Services.

### C-411-1: Payer of Last Resort

VR is the payer of last resort. Comparable benefits and required customer participation in the cost of services must be applied to the cost of all training services before VR funds are used. For more information, refer to D-203-3 Use of Comparable Benefits.

Because VR uses tax revenue for case service expenditures, VR has the additional obligation to purchase the least expensive services that meet the vocational needs of the customer. For more information, refer to D-203-2 Best Value Purchasing.

The following are sources of comparable services and benefits:

* US Department of Veterans Affairs
* Pell Grant
* Disability services offices on college and university campuses
* Waivers
* Other entitlement programs

### C-411-2 Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Income Recipients

Customers who are eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) because of a disability are exempt from required participation in the cost of training services that are:

* associated with basic living requirements (BLR) calculations; or
* associated with payment limitations for public universities, public colleges, or public technical institutions for tuition, fees, and other training-related expenses.

SSI and SSDI recipients are **not** exempt from the requirement to use comparable services and benefits for all services, such as tuition exemptions, federal financial aid that does not require repayment, or other free or low-cost services that are readily available to the customer. Refer to D-203 Purchasing Decisions for more information.

If a customer who receives SSI or SSDI chooses to attend an independent or proprietary training institution even though a comparable public training institution is available, the customer is responsible for the cost that is above the cost of training from the comparable public training institution.

### C-411-3 Repeating Courses

VR usually does not pay for courses that must be repeated. If VR funds are used to pay for a course more than once, the VR counselor must consult with the VR Supervisor, and the justification for VR support of the repeated course must be clearly documented by the VR counselor in an RHW case note.

Counseling and guidance should be provided to ensure that the customer is using available supports and is complying with customer responsibilities as defined on the IPE or IPE amendment.

### C-411-4 Withdrawals and Refunds

When a customer withdraws from a course or VR terminates services before the customer completes the course, the VR counselor pursues a refund per the school's policy.

### C-411-5 Creating Service Authorizations for Training Services

An SA is the only valid means by which VR can authorize the purchase of goods and services on behalf of VR customers.

#### Encumbrance Period

VR limits the number of encumbrance periods for training and related services to two semesters, trimesters, quarters, or other school registration periods. For example, the VR counselor might have issued service authorizations for the fall semester and must issue service authorizations for the spring semester when the customer needs to register for the spring semester before the end of fall semester. However, the IPE must include the entire time frame that is required for the customer to complete the approved training that is needed to reach the vocational goal. For more information about developing the IPE, refer to B-505 Content of the IPE.

**Prorating Costs When Crossing Fiscal Years**

To pay the fall tuition at a college or university, the VR counselor can either:

* use funds for the fiscal year; or
* prorate the cost.

For offices and/or caseloads that still have funds available for the current fiscal year, the tuition portion of an SA for the fall semester at a college or university can be encumbered using only the basic VR budget for the current fiscal year.

When taking this approach, staff members must keep the following restrictions in mind:

* The office or caseload must have sufficient funding to charge the full tuition to the current fiscal year budget.
* If funding is sufficient, the VR counselor charges only the tuition portion to the current budget and prorates the costs for dorm rooms, meal plans, parking, lab fees, and all other service expenses, as required by the state comptroller’s office; and
* For RHW to allow the use of only current state fiscal year funds on the tuition line in an SA, the start and end dates must be in August; for example, August 14, 2018, to August 31, 2018. Staff members use the SA comments to document the actual full dates of service.

For additional information refer to D-212-3 Prorating Services.

#### Service Records for Training at a College or University

(Insert specification levels). (Placeholder)

#### Service Records for Training at a Proprietary University

(Insert specification levels). (Placeholder)

## C-412 Maximum Payment for a Training at a College or University

VR pays for training based on the type of institution in which the customer is enrolled. To determine the type of institution in which a customer is enrolled, refer to [College for all Texans— Institutions of Higher Education](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/apps/degreeprograms/). This subsection and subsection C-413 list the maximum amounts that VR is permitted to pay per semester or grading period for tuition and fees.

To calculate the amount that VR can pay toward the cost of the customer’s tuition and required fees for training at a community college, technical or state college, four-year college, university, or health-related institution, the VR counselor uses the following procedure:

1. Multiply the number of credit hours the customer is taking per semester or grading period by the maximum payment amount listed in:

* C-412-1 Public Training Institutions Two-Year Community College;
* C-412-2 Public Training Institutions Technical and State College
* C-412-3 Public Training Institutions Four-Year College or University; or
* C-412-4 Public Health Related Institutions.

This is the maximum amount that VR can pay toward the cost of the customer’s tuition and required fees.

1. Next, find the amount due for tuition and required fees and deduct the Pell Grant amount and the amount need based financial aid that does not require repayment.
2. From this amount if the customer is over BLR, deduct BLR.
3. If the amount in #2 is less than the maximum that VR can pay in #1, VR issues the service authorization for the amount from #2; or

If the amount in #2 is more than the maximum that VR pays in #1, VR issues the service authorization for the maximum amount from #1; or

If the amount in #2 is 0. VR does not issue a service authorization.

The VR3405 Tuition Payment Calculation Worksheet can be used to calculate the amount that VR can pay toward the cost of the customer’s tuition and required fees.

#### IPE Requirements

If the customer is enrolled in post-secondary education and a current IPE is in place, VR applies the amount that is written in the current IPE unless the new maximum payment would result in a higher payment. If the new maximum amount is a higher amount, the plan must be amended.

If the customer has an IPE in place, but they are not currently enrolled in post-secondary education, the IPE is amended to reflect the new maximum pay rate before the customer enrolls in the training institution.

The IPE should not reflect specific rates but should refer to as “will pay amounts per policy”.

For more information on IPE and IPE amendments refer to B-500: Individualized Plan for Employment.

### C-412-1 Public Training Institutions: Two-Year Community College

Verify that the institution is a public community college by finding where it is classified on the  [College for all Texans— Institutions of Higher Education](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/apps/degreeprograms/) website.

As of July 2019, VR pays the maximum rate of $125 per semester hour. This amount is all inclusive of tuition and fees combined at a public community college.

These rates are based on one standard deviation above the averages from [College for All Texans](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/index.cfm?objectid=63188B97-0C47-0020-6DBBBAD96A7DFB83) (college cost 2018-2019) average of tuition and fees. VR reviews these rates annually in July. For a history of the rates see “Training Maximum Payment History page”.

Exceptions to the limitations for tuition and fees require justification and approval by the VR Manager. For additional information refer to D:200 Purchasing Goods and Services.

### C-412-2: Public Training Institutions: Technical and State College

Verify that the institution is a public technical or state college by finding where it is classified on the [College for all Texans— Institutions of Higher Education](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/apps/degreeprograms/) website.

As of July 2019, VR pays the maximum amount of $198 per semester hour. This amount is all inclusive of tuition and fees combined at a public technical or state college.

These rates are based on one standard deviation above the averages from [College for All Texans](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/index.cfm?objectid=63188B97-0C47-0020-6DBBBAD96A7DFB83) (college cost 2018-2019) average of tuition and fees. VR reviews these rates annually in July. For a history of the rates see “Training Maximum Payment History page”.

Exceptions to the limitations for tuition and fees require justification and approval by the VR Manager. For additional information refer to D:200 Purchasing Goods and Services.

### C-412-3: Public Training Institutions: Four-Year College or University

VR staff verifies that the institution is a public university by finding how it is classified on the [College for all Texans— Institutions of Higher Education](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/apps/degreeprograms/) website.

As if July 2019, VR pays the maximum amount of $359 per semester hour. This amount is all inclusive of tuition and fees combined at a public university.

These rates are based on one standard deviation above the averages from [College for All Texans](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/index.cfm?objectid=63188B97-0C47-0020-6DBBBAD96A7DFB83) (college cost 2018-2019) average of tuition and fees. VR reviews these rates annually in July. For a history of the rates see “Training Maximum Payment History page”.

Exceptions to the limitations for tuition and fees require justification and approval by the VR Manager. For additional information refer to D:200 Purchasing Goods and Services.

### C-412-4: Public Health Related Institution

VR staff verifies that the institution is a public health-related institution by finding how it is classified on the [College for all Texans— Institutions of Higher Education](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/apps/degreeprograms/) website.

As of July 2019, VR pays the maximum amount of $413 per semester hour. This amount is all inclusive of tuition and fees combined at a public health-related institution.

These rates are based on one standard deviation above the averages from [College for All Texans](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/index.cfm?objectid=63188B97-0C47-0020-6DBBBAD96A7DFB83) (college cost 2018-2019) average of tuition and fees. VR reviews these rates annually in July. For a history of the rates see “Training Maximum Payment History page”.

Exceptions to the limitations for tuition and fees require justification and approval by the VR Manager. For additional information refer to D:200 Purchasing Goods and Services.

### C-412-5: Private or Out-of-State Training at a College or University

When a customer chooses to attend a private (independent) or an out-of-state college, technical or state college, university, or health-related institution even though a comparable public training institution is available in Texas, the VR counselor:

* documents the reason for selecting the public training institution that is being compared to the private or out-of-state training institution in a case note; and
* follows the procedures above for determining the amount that can be paid to the public institution. This is the amount that VR can pay toward the cost of a private institution.

Tuition and fees paid by VR cannot exceed in-state tuition and fees.

For approval requirements see C-406-3 Content of an IPE for Training at a College or University and [D-206-3 Out-of-State Purchases](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d206-3).

## C-413: Maximum Payment for Training at a Proprietary Institution

VR staff verifies that the institution is licensed or certified by TWC on the [Licensed Career Schools and Colleges Directory](https://apps.twc.state.tx.us/CSC/directory/search.do) website or the [Eligible Training Provider System](https://apps.twc.state.tx.us/PROVIDERCERT/dispatcher?link=HREF&pageid=APP_HOME) website before including the training on the IPE.

The maximum amount VR can pay for tuition and fees combined for full-time enrollment at a proprietary institution, after comparable benefits and BLR is applied, is the lesser of:

* $125 per semester hour; or
* $3,750 per year.

As of July 2019, these rates are based on one standard deviation above the averages from College for All Texans public training institutions two-year community college (college cost 2018-2019) average of tuition and fees. VR reviews these rates annually in July. For a history of the rates see “Training Maximum Payment History page”.

Exceptions to the limitations for tuition and fees require justification, consultation with the State Office Program Specialist, and approval by the VR Manager. For additional information refer to D:200 Purchasing Goods and Services.

#### IPE Requirements

If the customer is enrolled in training and a current IPE is in place, VR applies the amount that is written in the current IPE unless the new maximum payment would result in a higher payment. If the new maximum amount is a higher amount, the plan must be amended.

If the customer has a IPE in place, but they are not currently enrolled in training. The IPE is amended to reflect the new maximum pay rate before the customer enrolls in the training institution.

The IPE should not reflect specific rates but should refer to as “will pay amounts per policy”.

For more information on IPE and IPE amendments refer to B-500: Individualized Plan for Employment. For more information about previous rates refer to [VR Services Manual List of Revisions](https://twc.texas.gov/manuals/revisions/vrsm-revisions.html).

### C-413-1 Out-of-State Training at a Proprietary Institution

When a customer chooses to attend a private or an out-of-state proprietary school even though a comparable training institution is available in Texas, the VR counselor:

* documents the reason for selecting the out-of-state proprietary school that is being compared to the public training institution in a case note; and
* follows the procedures above for determining the amount that can be paid to the institution. This is the amount that VR can pay of the cost of an out-of-state institution.

Tuition and fees paid by VR must not exceed VR maximum amount for combined tuition and fees.

For approval requirements see C-407-2 Content of a IPE for Training at a Proprietary Institution and [D-206-3 Out-of-State Purchases](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200#d206-3).

## C-414 Goods and Services that Support Training Services

In addition to sponsorship of tuition and fees, additional goods and services can be included in the customer’s IPE or services justification case note, as appropriate, if they are required for the customer to participate in planned training. The additional goods and services include:

* textbooks and supplies;
* reader services;
* assistive technology equipment and/or software;
* low-vision devices;
* vocational rehabilitation teacher services;
* employment assistance specialists;
* training-related supplies;
* transportation;
* readers;
* interpreters;
* note takers;
* wheelchair pushers;
* room and board;
* occupational licenses;
* computers;
* orientation and mobility training; and
* referral to community resources.

For more information about content in the IPE and IPE amendment, refer to B-500 Individualized Plan for Employment. For information about specific goods and services refer to content throughout the manual.

### C-414-1: Textbooks and Supplies

VR can purchase required textbooks and course-related supplies when they are not already included in the cost of tuition and fees.

VR must consider the most cost-effective option when purchasing textbooks and supplies.

Options for purchasing textbooks include traditional hardcopy textbooks (new or used) and other formats of textbooks, such as audiobooks and electronic books, or “e-books.”

#### Service Authorization

The SA for textbooks or supplies must be itemized with the description of the quoted amount for each item. For additional information, refer to D-200 Purchasing Goods and Services.

#### Maximum Amounts

The maximum amounts that VR can pay per semester or grading period for required textbooks and course-related supplies that are not included in tuition and fees are as follows:

* Community college: $1,068
* Technical and state college: $555
* Four-year college or university: $724
* Health-related institutions: $715
* Proprietary institutions (career colleges): $1,068

These rates are based on one standard deviation above the averages from [College for All Texans](http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/index.cfm?objectid=63188B97-0C47-0020-6DBBBAD96A7DFB83) (college cost 2018-2019) averages for books and supplies. VR reviews these rates annually in July. For a history of the rates see “Training Maximum Payment History page”.

Tools and equipment that are required for training, but will be kept and used by the customer for employment after completing training are purchased according to processes and procedures in [C-1407: Tools and Equipment](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-c-1400#c1407). The amount for these items is not included in or subject to the maximum amounts for required textbooks and course-related supplies.

Exceptions to the limitations for books and supplies require justification and approval by the VR Manager. For additional information refer to D:200 Purchasing Goods and Services.

#### Reselling Textbooks

If a hardcopy of a textbook is purchased but is not needed for a class, for reference, or for the customer’s major or minor field of study, the customer can sell the textbook back to the bookstore. When a textbook is sold back to the bookstore, the customer must provide to the VR counselor a copy of the receipt of sale, which is kept in the case file. The amount that was received from the sale of the book must be applied to the cost of books next semester. The amount on the receipt for that textbook is subtracted from the amount needed for the following semester’s required textbooks.

If textbooks are sold back to the bookstore and the customer will no longer be participating in training the following semester, the funds, along with the receipt of sale, must be returned to the VR office.

### C-414-2: Tutoring Services

(placeholder leave as is no changes)

### C-414-3: Room and Board Services

### (place holder leave as is no changes)