# Board VR Requirements Chapter 3: Student HireAbility Navigator Program

Revisions effective **September 1, 2021**

## 3.1 Introduction

The Student HireAbility Navigator program establishes a mechanism by which pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) are provided to students with disabilities, as required under Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act). The Student HireAbility Navigator program is a statewide strategy to improve and increase services to students with disabilities.

WIOA requires States to reserve and expend fifteen percent (15%) of the federal portion of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Basic Grant allotment for the provision of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities. The list of required pre-employment transition services is listed in Section 3.5.1.2 of this chapter.

A student with a disability must meet the following criteria:

* The student must be between 14 and 22 years of age, and must be less than 22 years of age as of September 1 of the previous year;
* The student is eligible for and receiving special education or related services under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or is an individual with a disability for purposes of §504 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
* The student is in an educational program, including:
  + secondary education;
  + nontraditional or alternative secondary education programs, including home schooling;
  + postsecondary education programs; and
  + other recognized educational programs, such as those offered through the juvenile justice system.

TWC has previously approved Pathways to Careers Initiative (PCI) to expand opportunities for Texas students with disabilities to receive pre-employment transition services. PCI also complements and advances the Tri-Agency initiative by TWC, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) by providing applied learning opportunities through internships and work experiences, ensuring that students have better information about career pathways to enable informed choices, and increasing the number of Texas students who complete a postsecondary degree or credential.

To build on these existing pre-employment transition services and initiatives, and most effectively and efficiently serve students with disabilities, TWC will expand systemic capacity within the Texas Workforce Solutions system by establishing partnerships and developing innovative and evidence-based approaches to service delivery. The Student HireAbility Navigator program is designed to support this capacity building priority.

The Student HireAbility Navigator program is based on TWC's prior successful Texas Disability Navigator initiative. It will foster the development of innovative and effective approaches to service delivery and ensure strong coordination between TWC VR and independent school districts (ISDs), as well as with the other WIOA core programs.

## 3.2 Student HireAbility Navigator Role

Like the Texas Disability Navigator initiative, the role of Student HireAbility Navigators is to improve access to employment and training services and increase employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities. However, the Student HireAbility Navigator program will focus exclusively on services for students with disabilities who are in the early phases of preparing for transition to postsecondary education and employment. Each Student HireAbility Navigator serves as a resource in the workforce development area to support, expand, and enhance the provision of pre-employment transition services that are provided by VR as well as by the other partners and programs in the workforce development area.

Navigators perform duties and provide deliverables in the following three focus areas:

* Capacity building and systems development
* Partnering and collaboration
* Informing and engaging employers

The overarching goal of the activities within the three focus areas is to increase the likelihood of students' independence and inclusion in communities and competitive integrated workplaces, and their successful participation in postsecondary education experiences.

The Student HireAbility Navigators achieve this goal through execution of the deliverables listed in Section 3.5 of this chapter. Although not their primary role, Student HireAbility Navigators may assist with some direct services to students with disabilities as appropriate, but only if the Student HireAbility Navigator is not a Board staff member. It is important to emphasize that the primary role and responsibility of the Student HireAbility Navigator is not direct service delivery, but the development, planning, coordination, and promotion of systemic and collaborative strategies that result in the provision of quality pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities in the workforce development area.

## 3.3 Student HireAbility Navigator Structure

TWC will execute a contract with each Local Workforce Board for the Student HireAbility Navigator program. This chapter describes the scope of work, responsibilities, and deliverables of the Student HireAbility Navigator Program.

TWC will pay the Board the amount specified in Section 3.7.1.1 of this chapter for each Student HireAbility Navigator. TWC will pay for one Student HireAbility Navigator in each of the 22 small and mid-sized Board areas, and two Student HireAbility Navigators for each of the 6 large Board areas. (See also Section 3.7 Payment Structure and Billing). The 6 large Boards are Dallas, Tarrant, North Central, Gulf Coast, Alamo and Lower Rio. These 6 Board areas have a concentration of at least 5% of all students with disabilities in Texas between the ages of 14 and 22\* and, therefore, need for the additional Student HireAbility Navigator.

\*Population Age 14-22 is based on U.S. Census disability estimates and Texas State Data Center population estimates.

The Student HireAbility Navigator may be Board staff or the Board may subcontract the position. Boards with funding for two positions may use Board staff, subcontract or use both approaches to fill the positions.

Student HireAbility Navigators must meet the minimum qualifications in Section 3.4.

## 3.4 Student HireAbility Navigator Qualifications

### 3.4.1 Education

3.4.1.1 Graduation from an accredited four-year college or university.

3.4.1.2 One additional year of full-time qualifying experience may be substituted for each year (30 semester hours) of the required education.

### 3.4.2 Experience

3.4.2.1 Four years of full-time work experience.

3.4.2.2 Work experience in the fields of education, vocational rehabilitation, workforce development programs, human services programs, or non-profit organizations serving students or persons with disabilities is preferred.

3.4.2.3 A master's degree from an accredited college or university may be substituted for two years of the required qualifying experience.

## 3.5 Student HireAbility Navigator Program Responsibilities and Deliverables

### 3.5.1 Student HireAbility Navigator Duties and Responsibilities

#### 3.5.1.1 Student HireAbility Navigator Plan Development and Submittal

1. In consultation with the local VR offices in the workforce development area, identify the pre-employment transition services available to students with disabilities in the workforce development area.
2. Convene partners, including school districts and Education Service Centers, to discuss successful strategies and services, gaps, and opportunities for collaboration to improve the quality and/or availability of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities.
3. In consultation with the Board and the VR offices in the workforce development area, school districts, and other community partners, create a three-year action plan to achieve the deliverables in Sections 3.5.1.2 – 3.5.1.4.
4. The plan must include goals, strategies, deliverables, accountable parties and timelines for each deliverable listed in Sections 3.5.1.2 – 3.5.1.4.
5. The Board's completed Student HireAbility Navigator Plan must be submitted to TWC within six months of the initial contract effective date or, no later than six months after the initial hire date of the Student HireAbility Navigator, whichever is later. For Boards with two Student HireAbility Navigators, the hire date is that of the first Navigator hired. Plans must be submitted to TWC at the following email address: [StudentNavigators@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:StudentNavigators@twc.state.tx.us).
6. TWC VR staff will review and accept the Student HireAbility Navigator Plan within 30 days of submission and may request additional detail or revision prior to final acceptance of this deliverable.
7. After submission of the initial Student HireAbility Navigator Plan, plan updates are to be submitted at least annually as part of the Board's quarterly report.

#### 3.5.1.2 Capacity Building and Systems Development Responsibilities

In consultation and coordination with local VR offices, and other Board and Board contractor staff, Student HireAbility Navigators will:

1. Develop and sustain relationships with VR staff, including but not limited to regional management, regional program staff, VR counselors, managers, and supervisors.
2. Facilitate ongoing communication with VR staff and work jointly when developing activities outlined within this chapter.
3. Develop and/or disseminate information to increase community and system awareness of the resources and activities available to students with disabilities in the following five pre-employment transition services:
   1. job (career) exploration counseling;
   2. work-based learning experiences, which may include in school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible;
   3. counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
   4. workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and
   5. instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.
4. In coordination with VR staff, develop and sustain relationships with the education partners in the local workforce area, including but not limited to school districts, Education Service Centers private schools and home school organizations, to promote awareness and availability of pre-employment transition services and Workforce Solutions programs to schools, parents, and students.
5. Promote the use of online career exploration, postsecondary education planning, and work readiness tools, including those available through TWC's Labor Market and Career Information Department.
6. In consultation with Workforce Solutions Offices, local VR offices, local education agencies, parents and students with disabilities, employers, and community partners, develop effective and innovative strategies to:
   1. Provide information on VR and Pre-ETS to students who are members of traditionally unserved and underserved populations.
   2. Enhance opportunities for postsecondary activities for students with disabilities.
   3. Coordinate and/or monitor implementation of the strategies

#### 3.5.1.3 Partnerships and Collaboration Responsibilities

1. Identify community partners and establish collaborative relationships. Convene and/or attend workgroups, committees, coalitions, and cross-agency teams to foster system and community coordination of pre-employment transition services and activities for students with disabilities. Collect and disseminate information to Board and VR staff.
2. Provide information, training, and technical assistance to Workforce Solutions Offices, local VR offices, school districts, Education Service Centers, community partners, and employers, regarding resources and activities available to assist students with disabilities to transition successfully to postsecondary education, employment, or both.
3. Develop and coordinate events, campaigns, and other activities that promote the Texas HireAbility Campaign and increase student and family awareness of and access to pre-employment transition services..
4. Represent Student HireAbility Navigator program by serving as a liaison between VR & Workforce Solutions Offices and the Board. Assist with VR related activities and ensure that programs developed are accessible and inclusive.
5. Partner with Student HireAbility Navigators within the VR region and state to accomplish and expand program deliverables outlined in this chapter.

#### 3.5.1.4 Responsibilities to Inform and Engage Employers

In consultation and coordination with local VR offices, and other Board and Board contractor staff, such as business services staff, Student HireAbility Navigators will:

1. Develop relationships with Board and VR staff, including but not limited to Business Relations Coordinators, Community Outreach Specialists and Business Service staff. Student HireAbility Navigators will streamline communication and organize events and activities that promote VR services and increase employers' understanding of the abilities of students with disabilities.
2. Disseminate information and resources to employers and community partners.
3. Coordinate with Board and VR staff to develop training and/or resources to educate, support, and enhance employers' awareness of disability etiquette and accommodations for students with disabilities.
4. Collaborate with Board and VR staff to develop work- based learning opportunities for students with disabilities, including internships, summer employment, other employment opportunities available throughout the school year, and apprenticeships.
5. Conduct outreach and develop relationships with business and industry organizations, including local chamber of commerce, economic development collaboratives, and local employment organizations.

#### 3.5.1.5 Additional Duties and Responsibilities

1. The Student HireAbility Navigator must ensure that state and/or local VR staff receive the data and information necessary to fulfill federal reporting requirements regarding the provision of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities that occur as a direct result of the deliverables in Section 3.5 of this chapter.
2. The Student HireAbility Navigator must comply with federal and state requirements regarding confidentiality of student data, as applicable to each of the deliverables in Section 3.5 of this chapter.
3. The Student HireAbility Navigator must ensure that resources and materials developed for the deliverables in Section 3.5 are available in accessible formats for students who use screen reader software, screen magnification software, large print, and Braille.
4. The Student HireAbility Navigator must ensure that reasonable accommodations are available and provided as requested for activities associated with the deliverables in Section 3.5.
5. The Student HireAbility Navigator must participate in meetings called by TWC for training, information sharing, and Student HireAbility Navigator Program development and improvement.
6. The Student HireAbility Navigator must ensure that at least 60% of time is expended performing duties related to Pre-ETS as defined in Section 3.5.1.2. The remaining time must be expended on tasks related to VR.
7. Student HireAbility Navigators may not perform any of the Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) services defined in Section 1.5 of the BRM for which the Board receives separate payments through completion of SEAL deliverables. Student HireAbility Navigators may assist with outreach, planning, and coordination activities during the SEAL program.

### 3.5.2 Board Responsibilities

#### 3.5.2.1 Quarterly Deliverables Report Submittal

1. Each Board shall submit the Student HireAbility Navigator Program Quarterly Deliverables Report. Quarterly reports are due the 15th of September, December, March, and June of each year.
2. Payment will be made on a quarterly basis, contingent upon TWC receipt and acceptance of the Quarterly Deliverables Reports by the Student HireAbility Navigator.
3. The Quarterly Deliverables Report must be submitted using the Student HireAbility Navigator Initiative Quarterly Deliverables Report template provided by TWC.
4. TWC will review and accept the Quarterly Deliverables Report within two weeks of submission. Acceptance within two weeks is contingent upon submission of a complete report and TWC may request additional detail or revision prior to final acceptance of the deliverable.
5. The Quarterly Deliverables Report must be submitted to the following email address: [StudentNavigators@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:StudentNavigators@twc.state.tx.us)
6. Boards must retain documentation sufficient to demonstrate completion of each deliverable and must make that documentation available to TWC upon request.
7. Student HireAbility Navigators must share Quarterly Deliverables Report with VR Deputy Regional Director.
8. Boards must notify TWC within one week of Student HireAbility Navigator termination or new hire.

#### 3.5.2.2 Confidentiality of Student Data

The Board must retain a signed statement of acknowledgement from each Student HireAbility Navigator regarding compliance with federal and state requirements regarding confidentiality of student data, as applicable to each of the deliverables in Section 3.5 of this chapter.

#### 3.5.2.3 Monitoring

Boards and any subcontractors associated with the Student HireAbility Navigator program must allow on-site monitoring visits and desk reviews, as deemed necessary by TWC to review all pertinent records. Boards and any subcontractors associated with the Student HireAbility Navigator program must remedy in a timely manner, any weaknesses, deficiencies, or program noncompliance found as a result of a review, audit or investigation, and monitoring visit conducted by TWC.

## 3.6 Mentorship and Performance

### 3.6.1 Mentorship

Each year, TWC will select up to six Student HireAbility Navigator Mentors for the program. Student HireAbility Navigator Mentors are selected based on performance criteria outlined in section 3.6.2. Student HireAbility Navigator Mentors are responsible for representing the program and providing mentorship and support to the Student HireAbility Navigator team. TWC will assign each Student HireAbility Navigator Mentor to mentees. The Mentors will be responsible for meeting additional quarterly deliverable requirements which include providing mentorship, assisting with large scale program outreach activities, and representing the Student HireAbility Navigator initiative in public engagements.

### 3.6.2 Selection Criteria and Process

Student HireAbility Navigator Mentors will be selected on an annual basis using the following selection criteria:

* Student HireAbility Navigator has been in the position for at least one year.
* Student HireAbility Navigator has received an exceptional rating during quarterly review cycles.
* Student HireAbility Navigator possesses strong presentation skills, communication skills, and leadership skills.
* Student HireAbility Navigator has received letter of recommendation from supervisor.

To apply for the Student HireAbility Navigator mentorship position, Student HireAbility Navigators must submit documentation to verify minimum qualification and selection criteria within 30-days of notice of application period. TWC will review documentation and notify the Student HireAbility Navigators of the mentorship selection within two weeks of submission. The Student HireAbility Navigator Mentorship term is one year. Mentors may serve consecutive years but must reapply each year. If a Student HireAbility Mentor cannot fulfill the year-long term, the position may be filled during the subsequent quarterly reporting period.

### 3.6.3 Reporting Requirements and Payment Structure

Student HireAbility Navigator Mentors must submit a Quarterly Mentorship Report along with the Student HireAbility Navigator Quarterly Report. The mentorship fee of $2,000 will be paid on a quarterly basis upon submission of the Mentorship invoice. At least 75% of the mentorship fee must be paid directly to the Student HireAbility Mentor. Additional funds may be used toward other mentorship related costs. Boards must provide supporting documentation to verify mentorship fee payments. If a Student HireAbility Mentor cannot fulfill the year-long term, the mentorship fee will be prorated.

### 3.6.4 Student HireAbility Navigator Performance

TWC will monitor Student HireAbility Navigators’ compliance and performance using the Student HireAbility Navigator Quarterly Review Checklist [insert hyperlink]. The review checklist will be used during review of Student HireAbility Navigator Initial Report, Quarterly Report, and Three-year Action Plan. The Quarterly Review Checklist includes a performance rating scale which applies the following scoring methodology.

5 Exceptional: Student HireAbility Navigator rated compliant on all review criteria. Work performance consistently exceeds performance standards.

4 Above Expectations: Student HireAbility Navigator rated compliant on all review criteria. Work is fully satisfactory and often exceeds performance standards.

3 Successful: Student HireAbility Navigator rated compliant on at least 80% of review criteria. Work is fully satisfactory and occasionally may exceed performance standards.

2 Mentorship Needed: Student HireAbility Navigator rated compliant on less than 80% of review criteria. This rating will initiate mentorship and improvement is expected within six-month period.

1 Unsatisfactory: Student HireAbility Navigator is rated compliant on less than 80% of review criteria and has not made improvement during mentorship period. Improvement must be demonstrated within three-month period.

If a Student HireAbility Navigator receives a rating of 1 and no improvement has been made, TWC and Board can agree to terminate for the remaining contract year.

## 3.7 Payment Structure and Billing

### 3.7.1 Payment Structure

3.7.1.1 For each Student HireAbility Navigator hired by a Board to fulfill the requirements of this Chapter, TWC will pay a Board up to $113,000 for a 12-month contract term as further described in this section. No additional amounts will be paid by TWC to a Board for the salary, benefits, operating, oversight costs, or other costs necessary to fulfill the requirements of this chapter.

3.7.1.2 TWC will make an advance payment at the beginning of each contract if it determines it is necessary and in the best interest of the state to provide an advance payment to support Program activities. The advance payment will apply toward the total amount finally determined to have been earned by the Board at the end of the first purchase order. If the amount finally determined to have been earned by the Board at the end of the first purchase order is less than total payments made by TWC (including the advance payment), TWC will recoup unearned amounts at that time, such as through a payment offset or by the Board's submission of payment with a TWC Cash Remittance Report.

3.7.1.3 If TWC determines that a second advance is justified at the beginning of the second purchase order period, TWC will make a separate advance payment at that time. That advance will be reconciled in a like manner to the reconciliation process described in Section 3.7.1.2 at the end of the second purchase order period

3.7.1.4 An advance payment will not exceed $26,250 per Student HireAbility Navigator that TWC requires the Board to hire under the contract.

3.7.1.5 With exception of advance payment process described in this section, a Board will invoice TWC quarterly. The amount owed each quarter will be based on the number of days that the Board employed a Student HireAbility Navigator to fulfill the requirements of this chapter during that quarter. Payment will accrue at a rate of $26,250 per quarter, per Navigator. Payment for quarters during which a Student HireAbility Navigator was not employed for the full quarter will be prorated based on the number of days that the Navigator was employed for that purpose during that quarter.

3.7.1.6 TWC payment of quarterly invoices is contingent upon TWC receipt and acceptance of the Quarterly Deliverables Reports described in Section 3.5.2.1.

3.7.1.7 For Boards required to hire more than one Student HireAbility Navigator, the TWC payment to the Board of up to $113,000 per Student HireAbility Navigator per year does not establish a requirement that the amounts paid to a Board's Student HireAbility Navigators be equal.

3.7.1.8 Where TWC determines that the quality of work provided by a Student HireAbility Navigator, as demonstrated by the three-year plan and Quarterly Deliverables Reports described in this chapter, or by other information available to TWC, does not fulfill the requirements of this chapter, TWC and Board can agree to terminate for the remaining contract year.

### 3.7.2 Billing

3.7.2.1 A Board requiring an advance payment must invoice TWC for the advance between September 1and November 30. TWC will reconcile the advance at the end of that purchase order, August 31, as described in Section 3.7.1.3.

3.7.2.2 For regular payments, a Board will invoice TWC quarterly, at the rate described in Section 3.7.1.5.

3.7.2.3 The quarterly invoice will be remitted to TWC no earlier than the Board's submission of the Quarterly Deliverables Report required in Section 3.5.2.1.A.

3.7.2.4 To invoice TWC, including an invoice for an advance payment, a Board will e-mail the TWC Student HireAbility Navigator Invoice, along with the quarterly report, to [APPO@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:APPO@twc.state.tx.us), with a copy to [studentnavigators@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:studentnavigators@twc.state.tx.us).

3.7.2.5 TWC will make payment in accordance with the Texas Prompt Payment Act, upon receipt of complete, timely submitted invoices and upon TWC receipt and acceptance of the Board's Quarterly Report.

3.7.2.6 TWC will make payment by direct deposit.