# VR Services Manual B-200: Processing Initial Contacts and Applications

Revised June 29, 2020

## B-203: Initial Contact

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### B-203-4: Adjusting the Phase of an Initial Contact with Case Assignment to Initial Contact without Case Assignment

To request and complete a phase adjustment from an Initial Contact with Case Assignment back to an Initial Contact without Case Assignment, follow the procedure below.

The VR Counselor does the following:

1. Reviews the case and gathers information from the customer to ensure that a phase adjustment is appropriate
2. Selects the Phase Adjustment Request tab from the case in RHW
3. Selects the Save tab to set the approval status to pending and to generate an action for the VR Supervisor in RHW
4. Documents the justification for the phase adjustment in a case note that will automatically open in RHW when the phase adjustment request is saved

The VR Supervisor does the following:

1. Reviews and approves or denies the phase adjustment request in RHW by selecting the Phase Adjustment Approval tab from the case in RHW
2. Documents the approval or non-approval of the decision for the phase adjustment in a case note in RHW
3. Notifies the VR counselor that the phase adjustment was approved or denied

Note: This is only available if the adjustment is within the program year. If outside the quarter, but within the program year, email VR RHW Support to phase adjust the case with VR Supervisor approval.

## B-204: Application

If VR staff cannot meet with the customer to complete the application for services at the time of the initial contact, the customer is scheduled for an appointment for the earliest possible date, but no later than 30 days after the date of the initial contact.

The Diagnostic Interview is typically scheduled with the VR counselor at the same time the application for services is completed. For information on the Diagnostic Interview, refer to [B-205: Diagnostic Interview](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-200#b205).

A customer is not required to be physically present in the VR office at the time of application for services, but the individual must be present in Texas to apply for VR services. The customer or his or her representative may participate by phone or complete the application at an off-site location, such as in a school or at his or her home. However, an application is not complete until a signature is obtained from the customer or the customer's authorized representative on the application for services.

When scheduling an appointment to complete an application for services with a customer, the VR staff determines the customer's:

* language preference; and/or
* need for:
	+ a translator;
	+ sign-language interpreter services;
	+ reasonable accommodations;
	+ assignment to a specialty caseload; and
	+ other support services to facilitate the application and eligibility process.

### B-204-1: Application Process

Any individual that wants to apply for VR services must be allowed to do so.

When appropriate, the VR staff uses the Application Appointment Letter in RHW to schedule the appointment. This ensures that a record of this appointment is captured in RHW. If RHW is not available, VR staff schedules the appointment and complete the RHW Application Appointment Letter in RHW as soon as possible.

The customer is encouraged to bring the following information that will assist in completing the application and moving the case through the VR process:

* photo identification (for example, a driver's license, state issued ID, school ID, passport, or military ID) and Social Security card;
* names and addresses of doctors seen recently;
* names and addresses of schools attended;
* information about medical insurance, including Medicaid and Medicare;
* a list of the customer's places of employment, including the type of job, dates, reason for leaving, and salary;
* proof of income information for the customer and proof of income for the customer's spouse or parents, if the spouse or parents claim the customer as a dependent on their federal income tax (for example, a copy of the most recent pay statement, an award letter for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or another Title II disability benefit or Veterans Affairs (VA) benefit, or a Notice of Payment for workers' compensation.
* proof of expenses related to the customer's monthly mortgage or rental payments, prescribed diets and medicines, debts imposed by court order, medical costs, and disability related expenses;
* names, addresses, and phone numbers of two people who can contact the customer;
* reports of recent medical exams, school records, or other information that may help VR understand the customer's disability; and
* the customer's Ticket to Work, if the customer is receiving SSDI benefits and has been issued one.

If a customer does not have all the information listed above, VR staff must not delay scheduling or completing the application for services.

An option called “fast track” is available to complete the RHW application for returning customers when:

* it is within a year from when their previous case was closed; and
* the customer has the same disability as in their previous closed case.

Fast track will copy some of the customer’s application information from the previous case to the new case. VR staff must verify all information including any wages and monthly financial information to ensure that the copied information is still accurate.

The VR staff member who is taking the application for services provides copies of the following:

* VR5057, VR Program Application Statement with the customer’s signature from the RHW Application page,
* "Can We Talk? Appeal Procedures for Applicants and Customers," which explains VR's appeal and mediation procedures
* "A Guide for Applicants," which explains:
	+ services and outcomes;
	+ options for developing the IPE;
	+ components of the IPE;
	+ the customer's right to appeal; and
	+ services available from the Client Assistance Program.

VR staff explains the basic content of each of the documents and their purpose to the customer. A case note is entered in RHW documenting the date and method the information was provided to the customer.

The application must be completed in a location that is private enough to maintain the confidentiality of the information provided by the customer.

During the meeting, the VR staff:

* explains to the customer:
	+ the purpose and expected outcomes of vocational rehabilitation;
	+ VR expectations of the customer;
	+ the roles of the VR counselor and customer; and
	+ the customer's rights;
* explains to the customer the circumstances under which the customer's personal information is released;
* obtains the signatures required on the application and all other required forms, including the following to allow VR to collect and disclose information:
	+ [VR5061, Notice and Consent for Disclosure of Personal Information](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/gl/html/vocational_rehab_forms.html);
	+ [VR5060, Permission to Collect Information](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/gl/html/vocational_rehab_forms.html) (if needed); and
	+ [VR1517-2, Authorization for Release of Confidential Customer Records and Information](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/gl/html/vocational_rehab_forms.html);
* explains in detail the expected outcomes and services related to the VR; and
* gathers, reviews, and documents the information necessary to determine whether the customer is eligible for services.

The information for the application can be entered into RHW by any VR staff.

When RHW is not available, VR staff:

* prints a paper copy of the [VR5056, Application for Vocational Rehabilitation Services](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html);
* records the information by hand on the VR5056;
* obtains signatures on the completed VR5056;
* transfers the information from the VR5056 into RHW as soon as RHW is available (Note: The signature dates that are entered in RHW must match the signature dates that are on the VR5056.);
* keeps a copy of the paper application in the case file after the data has been entered in RHW;
* files the signed forms according to procedures in [D-303: Case File Organization](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-300#d303); and
* mails the customer a copy of the VR5057, VR Program Application Statement with the customer’s signature from the RHW Application page.

### B-204-2: Customer Identification and Authorization for Employment

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**B-206: Opening a Case**

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**B-206-2: Opening a New Case or Adjusting the Phase of a Previously Closed Case**

When a customer has a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) case that was previously closed and is requesting services again, the VR counselor determines whether to:

* open a new case;
* provide post-employment services; or
* adjust the phase of the case in ReHabWorks (RHW) within a program year, only if the case was closed:
* successfully or unsuccessfully after the individualized plan for employment (IPE); or
* before case assignment

Note: Phase adjustments outside the program year in which the case is closed are not allowed. For more information on program year, refer to the calendar on the [VR RHW Support Resources](https://twcgov.sharepoint.com/sites/ws/vr/VRSRHWSupp/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2Fsites%2Fws%2Fvr%2FVRSRHWSupp%2FVR%20RHW%20Support%20Resources&FolderCTID=0x012000D35B10C490647A42A5D8ABD54BA20AE5) page.

The customer's request to apply for additional services must not be delayed or denied on the basis that the customer has received services from VR in the past.

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**B-206-5: Adjusting the Phase of a Previously Closed Case**

A phase adjustment is a RHW process that changes a closed case. Phase adjustments must be used only when the:

* case closed before case assignment; or
* case closed either successfully or unsuccessfully after IPE; and
* date the case was phased adjusted is within the current program year

**Closure before Case Assignment Is Returned to Initial Contact without Case Assignment**

To request and complete a phase adjustment from a closed status before Case Assignment back to an Initial Contact without Case Assignment, follow the procedure below.

The VR counselor does the following:

1. Reviews the case and gathers information from the customer to ensure that a phase adjustment is appropriate
2. Selects the Phase Adjustment Request tab from the case in RHW
3. Selects the Save tab to set the approval status to pending and to generate an action for the VR Supervisor in RHW
4. Documents the justification for the phase adjustment in a case note that will automatically open in RHW when the phase adjustment request is saved

The VR Supervisor does the following:

1. Reviews and approves or denies the phase adjustment request in RHW by selecting the Phase Adjustment Approval tab from the case in RHW
2. Documents the approval or non-approval of the decision for the phase adjustment in a case note in RHW
3. Notifies the VR counselor that the phase adjustment was approved or denied

Note: This is only available if the adjustment is within the program year quarter. If outside the quarter, but within the program year, email VR RHW Support to phase adjust the case with VR Supervisor approval.

**Closure after IPE Is Returned to Active Status**

To request and complete a phase adjustment from a closed status after IPE back to an active status, follow the procedure below.

The VR counselor does the following:

1. Reviews the case and gathers information from the customer to ensure that a phase adjustment is appropriate
2. Selects the Phase Adjustment Request tab from the case in RHW
3. Selects the Save tab to set the approval status to pending and to generate an action for the VR Supervisor in RHW
4. Documents the justification for the phase adjustment in a case note that will automatically open in RHW when the phase adjustment request is saved

The VR Supervisor does the following:

1. Reviews and approves or denies the phase adjustment request in RHW by selecting the Phase Adjustment Approval tab from the case in RHW
2. Documents the approval or non-approval of the decision for the phase adjustment in a case note in RHW
3. Notifies the VR counselor that the phase adjustment was approved or denied

Note: This is only available if the adjustment is within the program year quarter. If outside the quarter, but within the program year, email VR RHW Support to phase adjust the case with VR Supervisor approval.

**Unsuccessful Closure Changed to a Successful Closure after IPE**

If a customer whose case was closed as an unsuccessful closure became employed during the same program year in which the case was closed, the VR counselor must first complete the phase adjustment process outlined above.

To change an unsuccessful closure after IPE to a successful closure, follow the procedure below.

The VR counselor does the following:

1. Reviews the case to ensure that all criteria for Successful Closure are met (see B-600: Closure and Post-Employment Services)
2. Updates the employment information in RHW (see B-600: Closure and Post-Employment Services)
3. Selects the Phase Adjustment Request tab from the case in RHW
4. Selects the Save tab to set the approval status to pending and to generate an action for the VR Supervisor in RHW
5. Documents the justification for the phase adjustment in a case note that will automatically open in RHW when the phase adjustment request is saved

The VR Supervisor does the following:

1. Reviews and approves or denies the phase adjustment request in RHW by selecting the Phase Adjustment Approval tab from the case in RHW;
2. Documents the approval or non-approval of the decision for the phase adjustment in a case note in RHW
3. Notifies the VR counselor that the phase adjustment was approved or denied

Note: This is only available if the adjustment is within the program year quarter. If outside the quarter, but within the program year, email VR RHW Support to phase adjust the case with VR Supervisor approval.

If the phase adjustment is approved, the VR counselor closes the case as a successful closure in RHW.

**Successful Closure Changed to Unsuccessful Closure after IPE**

If a case was closed as a successful closure but did not meet the criteria for a successful closure, the VR counselor must first complete the phase adjustment process above.

To change a successful closure after IPE to an unsuccessful closure, follow the procedure below.

The VR counselor does the following:

1. Reviews the case to ensure that all criteria for Unsuccessful Closure are met (see B-600: Closure and Post-Employment Services)
2. Selects the Phase Adjustment Request tab from the case in RHW
3. Selects the Save tab to set the approval status to pending and to generate an action for the VR Supervisor in RHW
4. Documents the justification for the phase adjustment in a case note that will automatically open in RHW when the phase adjustment request is saved

The VR Supervisor reviews and approves or denies the phase adjustment request in RHW by selecting the Phase Adjustment Approval tab from the case in RHW.

Note: This is only available if the adjustment is within the program year quarter. If outside the quarter, but within the program year, email VR RHW Support to phase adjust the case with VR Supervisor approval.

If the change is approved, the VR counselor closes the case as an unsuccessful closure in RHW.

## B-208: Social Security Recipients and Beneficiaries

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