# Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual C-800: Neurodevelopmental and Psychological Services

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## C-806: Substance Use Disorders Services

Substance use disorders are defined in the DSM-5 as a pathological pattern of behaviors related to the use of a substance or substances.

Substance Use Disorders Services refers to services that are provided for individuals who are eligible for VR services and who have been clinically diagnosed with a substance use disorder that is defined in the DSM-5. Substance use disorders that are specific to the use of caffeine or tobacco do not meet the criteria of creating a substantial impediment to employment for the purpose of eligibility for VR services.

Substance Use Disorders Services are provided only:

* when comparable benefits, such as services provided by community centers or indigent care organizations, are not available;
* when prescribed by a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist;
* when clinically necessary to achieve a planned employment outcome; and
* to individuals whose psychological disorders:
  + are stable or slowly progressive; and
  + can be corrected or stabilized within a reasonable time.

### C-806-1: Substance Use Disorders and Eligibility for VR Services

VR counselors assess customers to ensure that each customer has a basic understanding of substance use and abuse. VR counselors discuss any history of substance use and decide how to proceed with each case based on that history. To be eligible for VR services, customers with substance use disorders must produce proof that demonstrates regular participation in a treatment program or express a willingness to participate in therapeutic treatment. The customer must be participating in treatment if he or she is actively using substances.

Treatment options for substance use disorders that may be available through the customer’s community include, but are not limited to, the following:

* Inpatient or outpatient services
* Intensive outpatient programs
* Partial hospitalization programs
* Therapy and counseling
* Continuing care programs
* Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
* Narcotics Anonymous (NA)
* Church sobriety programs
* Community center sobriety programs

There is usually no cost associated with outpatient services provided by AA, NA, or church and community center sobriety programs.

The customer must make the decision to discontinue using substances and choose the method of recovery. If a customer with a substance use disorder applies for VR services and is not currently in treatment, the VR counselor assists the customer in finding treatment options in his or her community and allows the customer to make the choice to engage in treatment. The VR counselor may use random drug testing to verify that the customer is abstaining from drug use.

A customer who has previously participated in treatment and has been substance free without aftercare or support services is generally not considered to have a substantial impediment to employment. If the VR counselor determines that a substantial impediment to employment exists (such as frequent loss of employment due to substance use), the VR counselor must document how and why the customer has not been able to make satisfactory progress to obtain or retain employment due to substance use.

#### Eligibility for VR Services

Customers with conditions diagnosed or related to a substance use disorder must be participating in, be willing to participate in, or have successfully completed an inpatient or outpatient substance use disorder treatment program before receiving VR services connected with an individualized plan for employment (IPE). The VR counselor must verify the treatment.

VR counselors decide whether continuation of therapeutic treatment is adequate as a support or if new or additional interventions are needed. Below are some issues for the VR counselor to consider when working with a customer diagnosed with a substance use disorder.

The customer must:

* recognize that a substance use disorder is a disability and participate in a group treatment program or individual counseling; under medical supervision if appropriate;
* maintain consistent and regular attendance, and demonstrate progress in completing his or her treatment program;
* demonstrate a commitment to recovery, as evidenced by making progress in completing their treatment program;
* make satisfactory progress toward addressing issues related to his or her overall functioning by advancing in various stages of treatment;
* acknowledge that he or she is seeking VR services for assistance with employment and is committed to and demonstrates the actions to maintain sobriety; and
* be available to participate in the VR process for the purpose of acquiring or maintaining employment.

VR counselors must move a case forward if the customer is making progress in his or her recovery and demonstrates an ability to participate in VR services.

For additional information about eligibility criteria for specific conditions, refer to B-300: Determining Eligibility.

#### Counseling and Guidance

Early in the case, the VR counselor schedules regular contacts with the customer to provide guidance, including ongoing recovery and aftercare activities to prepare for engaging in employment. The VR counselor makes a schedule for verifying sobriety and customer participation in treatment. When considering the needs of the customer, the VR counselor must remain flexible regarding a customer’s abstinence before the initiation of VR services.

A period of VR counseling and guidance under the IPE may be initiated to resolve disability adjustment issues and plan or refine services and strategies that support recovery and lead to employment. Documentation of counseling and guidance progress is required every 180 days at a minimum.

In comorbid cases when substance use disorders co-occur with serious and persistent mental illness, the VR counselor must address all diagnoses simultaneously.

#### Relapse

VR counselors must understand that relapse is considered a natural symptom of the disease; therefore, it is incumbent upon the VR counselor to remain actively engaged with the customer to assist with recovery if a relapse occurs.

Temporary episodic setbacks or relapses are evaluated on an individual basis in terms of the continuing rehabilitation plan. If the VR counselor determines that the customer has relapsed due to substance use after eligibility is determined, the VR counselor helps the customer reengage with his or her treatment or aftercare program.

Triggers are external events that cause an intense and emotional reaction. The VR counselor must help the customer identify triggers and develop strategies to help the customer succeed with his or her current IPE. Triggers are identified by asking questions about situations or events that led up to the customer’s most recent relapse episode.

In the event of a relapse through counseling and guidance, the VR counselor:

* ensures that the customer contacts his or her sponsor, if applicable (most programs have an accountable individual working with the customer);
* helps the customer identify triggers (such as family, environment, and life situations) that cause relapse; and
* helps the customer create a plan that identifies what the customer will do when triggers occur.

For detailed information about working with individuals with substance use disorders, refer to the [Counselor Desk Reference (CDR) Chapter B14: Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/vrs/cdr/CDR-B14-Substance-Related-Addictive-Disorders-twc.docx) .

### C-806-2: Substance Use Disorders Services and Limits

VR may provide Substance Use Disorders Services, including, but not limited to, the following:

* Therapeutic residential treatment (see VRSM C-808: Supportive Residential Services)
* Brief cognitive counseling sessions (see VRSM C-703-26: Rehabiliative Therapies)
* Psychological services (see VRSM C-804: Psychological Services)
* Licensed Practical Counseling (see VRSM C-804-2: Psychological Services Limits)

#### Detoxification

Detoxification (detox) is a process used to assist the recovering individual through the acute effects of the substance he or she was using. This usually consists of hospitalization, medication, and nutritional assistance.

VR does not pay for detoxification services.

#### Methadone Treatment

Methadone treatment uses daily doses of methadone to replace the drug in order to prevent withdrawal symptoms and relapse. This is usually performed at medically supervised clinics. Methadone treatment does not include AA or NA practices.

VR does not pay for methadone treatment or related services.

### C-806-3: Documentation of Sobriety

VR counselors must look at a case in its entirety and assess documentation that supports a customer’s progress and his or her evidence of commitment to recovery. The VR counselor must regularly evaluate the customer’s case to assess whether an individual needs additional supports to be successful with his or her IPE.

#### Treatment or Supports to Maintain Sobriety

One of the following must be verifiable and provided by the customer to the VR counselor to ensure that the customer is actively participating in treatment and/or receiving support to maintain sobriety:

* AA and/or NA logs and a supporting letter from the customer’s AA or NA sponsor
* Records from licensed treatment sources
* Information from a probation or parole officer
* Drug test results from testing performed within 30 days

When a customer participates in a treatment or support program that is not provided by VR Substance Use Disorders Services, the VR counselor may consult with the state office program specialist for behavioral health and substance use to ensure that documentation exists to show that the customer continues to make progress toward sobriety and employment.

The VR counselor may request that the customer submit to a clinical drug test if sobriety is unable to be documented.

VR counselors may use urine and blood screenings to verify a customer’s sobriety and eligibility for VR services. VR does not pay for hair follicle drug screenings.

VR counselors must be aware of the psychological, behavioral, and physical signs of drug use. Signs that would warrant a drug screening include, but are not limited to:

* Psychological signs
* Unexplained changes in personality or attitude
* Sudden mood changes, irritability, anger outbursts, or inappropriate laughing
* Paranoia
* Behavioral Signs
* Poor attendance at or chronic tardiness for work
* Decline in performance/productivity
* Acting isolated, withdrawn, or secretive
* Physical signs
* Dilated pupils or bloodshot eyes
* Tremors
* Fidgeting/inability to sit still
* Drastic change in appearance, such as inappropriate clothing and grooming