# Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual Part D—Budgeting, Purchasing, Technical Information, and Quality Assurance

**Added on June 29, 2020**

# D-500: Business Procedures for VR Staff

Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation (TWC-VR) staff must follow TWC business procedures. However, some TWC-VR business procedures do not have a TWC equivalent. Business procedures that apply specifically to TWC-VR were previously captured in the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) Business Procedures Manual (BPM), which was transferred into relevant sections throughout the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual (VRSM). The DARS BPM has been retired.

Staff members using the material covered in this chapter should address questions through their chain of management to VR executive management.

## D-501: Ethics Policy

All VR staff must adhere to the ethical standards stated in the [Code of Professional Ethics for Rehabilitation Counselors](https://www.crccertification.com/filebin/pdf/ethics/CodeOfEthics_01-01-2017.pdf) (the Code) the [TWC Personnel Manual: Ethics and Standards of Conduct](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/hr/docs/twc_ethics_policy.pdf), and the [TWC Ethics Policy](https://intra.twc.texas.gov/intranet/gc/html/ethics.html).

The Code comprises the following six basic principles of ethical behavior:

* Autonomy: to honor the right to make individual decisions
* Beneficence: to do good to others
* Nonmaleficence: to do no harm to others
* Justice: to be fair and give equal justice to all
* Fidelity: to be loyal and keep promises
* Veracity: to be honest

VR counselors who violate the Code are subject to the actions defined by TWC performance management policies. If the VR counselor is certified through Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC), violations of the Code are also subject to CRCC action.

Solution-focused, respectful, nonexploitative, and empowering counseling relationships are built on high ethical standards. Understanding the principles listed in the Code is at the heart of the ethical decision-making process. The Code reflects the level of competency needed in professional relationships to promote and protect the spirit of caring and respect for individuals with disabilities.

High ethical standards also are involved in best-value purchasing and the wise use of funds. See [D-200: Purchasing](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-d-200) for additional information.

VR is committed to helping all staff make ethical decisions. It is essential that VR staff:

* adhere to the ethical standards stated in the Code as well as in all VR policy, procedure manuals, and all agency standards; and
* be accountable for those standards in the organization.

### D-501-1: Other Professional Codes of Ethics

Employees who work in a professional area with its own code of ethics (for example, counseling, legal, medical, or internal auditing) must abide also by the ethical conduct requirements of that professional field.

### D-501-2: Personal Relationships

Employees must exercise sound judgment in all relationships with customers and other employees by:

* displaying professional decorum; and
* refraining from personal involvement of any kind that would discredit or embarrass the agency or the individual involved.

Employees must not fraternize with or engage in personal relationships with customers. Employees must not attend social events for a customer unless it is part of their job duties, is included in the normal workday, and is approved in writing by the supervisor.

When dealing with customers, vendors, service providers, grantees, subrecipients, or other third parties doing business with TWC-VR, a TWC-VR employee, and his or her spouse or other individual with whom the employee cohabits, must not:

* provide personal loans of money or property, real or personal;
* benefit from contracts with TWC-VR or other state government entities that do business with TWC-VR (for example, bidding on TWC-VR office space);
* serve as a representative for active or former TWC-VR customers (except that employees may represent their own family members or customers with approval of the management chain pursuant to division policy);
* display or distribute advertisements for a vendor that suggest a TWC-VR preference for one vendor over another for personal business interests;
* lend his or her name in connection with any organization, facility, or vendor providing goods or services to TWC-VR or its customers;
* solicit or conduct business for any organization during TWC-VR work hours, except for voluntary, nonprofit, disability-related organizations (applicable to TWC-VR employees only); or
* attempt to evade or circumvent these restrictions by acting indirectly through someone else.

### D-501-3: Family Members as Customers

The term "family" includes one's:

* spouse;
* child;
* parent;
* grandparent;
* brother;
* sister;
* cousin;
* aunt;
* uncle;
* niece;
* nephew;
* any other individual related by:
	+ kinship;
	+ adoption; or
	+ marriage (such as a step relative, for example, stepchild, stepparent);
* all related individuals who are dependent upon the employee or employee's family member for personal care or services on a continuing basis; and
* all individuals living in the same household with the employee or with an employee's family member (regardless of kinship).

TWC-VR employees must not:

* directly provide or influence the provision of services for any member of their own families as defined above;
* access their own customer records or those of family members; and
* gain access to any customer records for which they do not have an official state business need.

For more information on ethics, see the [TWC Personnel Manual, 1.9 Ethics Policy (PDF)](https://intra.twc.texas.gov/intranet/manuals/hr/ch1.pdf#page=32), the [TWC Ethics Policy](https://intra.twc.texas.gov/intranet/gc/html/ethics.html), and the [2017 Code of Professional Ethics for Rehabilitation Counselors (PDF)](https://www.crccertification.com/filebin/pdf/ethics/CodeOfEthics_01-01-2017.pdf).

## D-502: Accessibility

For information about TWC’s accessibility policy, refer to the [TWC Accessibility Policy](https://twc.texas.gov/twc-accessibility-policy)

## D-503: Office of General Counsel

The [TWC Office of General Counsel (OGC)](https://intra.twc.texas.gov/intranet/gc/html/index.html) provides legal and ethical advice to TWC-VR staff in the performance of their duties.

OGC does not provide advice to:

* Individual employees for personal matters (for example, wills or divorces); or
* Any individual or organization outside of TWC.

Advise or legal opinions prepared by OGC must not be released outside of TWC-VR without the specific consent of the General Counsel.

### D-503-1: Access to TWC Office of General Counsel

Depending on the situation, TWC-VR staff may contact OGC directly or through the chain of management.

OGC can be contacted through one of the following options:

* Legal Request Portal at <https://twcgov.service-now.com/ogc>
* Phone: (512) 463-7902
* Email: twcogc@twc.state.tx.us

#### Direct Access

TWC-VR staff has direct access to OGC staff for guidance about:

* an urgent legal situation (for example, a law enforcement official requesting information);
* receipt of a lawsuit or subpoena involving TWC-VR or its employees;
* notice of involvement in an administrative hearing;
* questions about subrogation;
* questions regarding subpoenas and releases for customer records and information; and
* requests for release of personnel information.

When a customer, a customer’s representative, or a customer’s lawyer requests that TWC-VR staff verbally discuss a customer's case with a lawyer, the TWC-VR employee:

* notifies the employee's immediate supervisor; and
* contacts OGC before speaking with a customer’s lawyer.

#### Access through the Chain of Management

TWC-VR employees must contact OGC through the chain of management for:

* an interpretation of a law, regulation, or executive order;
* a legal opinion;
* assistance with an employee grievance, disciplinary action, or other action involving an employee;
* assistance in drafting or interpreting contracts;
* assistance relating to the *Texas Register*; or
* legal questions regarding policy.

### D-503-2: Texas Public Information Act

The OGC is the TWC administrator for the Texas Public Information Act. The Act requires that TWC-VR provide access to information that is collected and retained during the conduce of TWC-VR business.

When a member of the public submits a written request for public information to TWC-VR, TWC-VR must release the information to the extent provided by law.

A TWC-VR employee who receives a request for public information must coordinate with OGC through the chain of management.

For additional information, refer to the [TWC OGC Open Records](https://intra.twc.texas.gov/intranet/gc/html/open-records.html) intranet page and the TWC [Open Records Unit Manual](https://intra.twc.texas.gov/intranet/gc/docs/iru_manual.doc).

## D-504: Inventory Control for Customers

Refer to [VR Guidance Memorandum 20-01: Customer Inventory Tracking Requirements](https://intra.twc.texas.gov/intranet/vrs/docs/GM20-01-customer-inventory-tracking.docx), which is located on the [VRD Guidance Memorandum](https://intra.twc.texas.gov/intranet/vrs/html/guidance-information-memoranda.html) intranet page.

Additional resources include the [VR Customer Inventory Tracking List (SharePoint)](https://twcgov.sharepoint.com/sites/ws/vr/Lists/VR%20Customer%20Inventory%20Tracking/AllItems.aspx) and [VR Customer Inventory Points of Contact (POC) and Office Profile (Word)](https://twcgov.sharepoint.com/sites/ws/vr/VR%20Inventory%20Tracking%20%20POC/vr-customer-inventory-contact-list.docx).

## D-505: PLACEHOLDER Cash Receipts

## D-506: Payment Research

### D-506-1: Researching a Payment

"Warrant Number" and "Payment Number" are used interchangeably to mean warrant number (nine digits) or direct deposit number (six digits) for payment.

When a vendor contacts Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWC-VRS) for payment status, the TWC-VRS staff member advises the vendor that the status of payments that the state makes to vendors may be checked on the Texas State Comptroller website at: <https://mycpa.cpa.state.tx.us/securitymp1portal/displayLoginUser.do>.

If the vendor insists that the staff member verify payment information, the TWC-VRS staff member performs the following actions in ReHabWorks (RHW), using information from the Service Authorization (SA):

1. In the horizontal menu bar, select **Purchasing**; then, from the left menu, select **Purchasing** and **Search by SA Number**. The **Search by SA Number** page opens.
2. Enter the SA number in the **SA Number** field and click **Search**. The **SA Detail for:** page opens.
3. Click on the **Go to Receive/Pay Detail** button for payment information. The **SA Receive/Pay Detail** page opens.
4. Under **Payment Information**, find the **Voucher #**; follow the column down to **Warrant Information** and find **Warrant Date** and **Warrant #**.
* Payments by direct deposit are indicated by a six-digit warrant number in the **Warrant #** field.
* Payments by paper warrant are indicated by a nine-digit warrant number in the **Warrant #** field.

#### Payment by Direct Deposit

If the payment was made by direct deposit, the TWC-VRS staff member:

* provides the vendor with the direct deposit warrant number;
* provides the vendor with the date that the deposit was issued; and
* advises the vendor to contact the vendor’s bank with the direct deposit information to locate the payment. If the vendor’s bank cannot locate the payment, the vendor sends an inquiry to payables.rhwconsumers@twc.state.tx.us and includes the SA, warrant number, and amount of the payment. The Accounting Payables unit can be reached directly at (512) 463-1671, option 4.

Wire transfers from the Comptroller’s office typically appear in a vendor’s bank account approximately two business days from the warrant date.

#### Requesting a Warrant Cancellation

If a vendor does not receive a payment made via paper warrant and 30 or more days have passed since the warrant issue date, TWC-VRS staff member emails payables.rhwconsumers@twc.state.tx.us to request a warrant cancellation. This message must include the:

* SA number;
* voucher number;
* voucher amount;
* warrant number; and
* reason for the warrant’s cancellation.

The TWC-VRS office is responsible for reissuing any warrant that is requested to be canceled.

#### Determining Warrant Status

TWC Accounting can research the warrant through the Treasury to see whether the warrant has been cashed or is on hold.

**If the warrant has been cashed**, the TWC-VRS staff member:

* requests a copy of the cashed warrant if a copy is not readily available (It can take between seven and 10 days to receive.); and
* emails a copy to the individual that initiated the email request.

**If the warrant has not been cashed**, the TWC-VRS staff member:

* proceeds with warrant cancellation; or
* responds to the inquiry if the warrant is on hold.

**If no payment was issued**, the TWC-VRS staff member researches and assists with expediting payment. Payments must be reissued in accordance with the appropriate system of issuance:

* RHW; or
* Workforce Reporting Accounting and Procurement System (WRAPS).

#### Forgery Claims

If a payee claims forgery, the TWC-VRS staff member emails payables.rhwconsumers@twc.state.tx.us, and RHW accountants will follow current Comptroller Forgery Notification Procedures.

### D-506-2: Payments Issued in Error

It may be necessary to recover state warrants or payments that were issued in error. Email payables.rhwconsumers@twc.state.tx.us and request warrant cancellation.

If a warrant was issued:

* TWC Accounting retrieves the warrant before mailing and cancels the warrant through the Comptroller's office; or
* the issuing VR office contacts the vendor for return of the warrant before cashing.

**If the vendor cashed the warrant**, the issuing VR office requests a refund from the vendor, explaining that the funds were paid in error. Vendor contacts must be documented in the payment documentation, and each contact must be at least 30 days apart.

To show due diligence, the issuing VR office must give a vendor ample time to comply, using the following procedures:

* The first contact request may be made by phone.
* The second contact must be made in writing and sent via certified mail with tracked receipt.
* The third contact must be made in writing and sent via certified mail with tracked receipt.

Thirty days after the third notification has been sent, if the vendor does not respond with the requested refund, the issuing VR office:

* sends an email notification to payables.vendorholds@twc.state.tx.us, including the vendor’s tax identification number; and
* forwards documented contact attempts to payables.vendorholds@twc.state.tx.us.

TWC Accounting proceeds with the vendor hold process.

**If the payment was made by direct deposit and the date is six or fewer days ago**, TWC Accounting:

* completes a callback request form; and
* submits the form to the Comptroller's office.

If the payment date is seven days ago, the issuing VR office requests a refund from the vendor, explaining that the funds were paid in error.

Vendor contacts must be documented in payment documentation and be at least 30 days apart. To show due diligence, the issuing VR office must give a vendor ample time to comply, using the following procedures:

* The first contact request may be made by phone.
* The second contact must be made in writing and sent via certified mail with tracked receipt.
* The third contact must be made in writing and sent via certified mail with tracked receipt.

Thirty days after the third notification has been sent, if the vendor does not respond with the requested refund, the issuing VR office:

* sends an email notification to payables.vendorholds@twc.state.tx.us, including the vendor’s tax identification number; and
* forwards documented contact attempts to payables.vendorholds@twc.state.tx.us.

TWC Accounting proceeds with the Comptroller's vendor hold process.

### D-506-3: Reissuing a Warrant

A payment cannot be reissued to a vendor until:

* TWC VR receives the original warrant for cancellation; or
* the warrant cancellation is confirmed. Once a warrant is canceled, staff will see the Warrant Cancel Date on the SA directly under the Warrant # in RHW.

### D-506-4: Warrant Hold

#### Verification of a Customer Payee’s Hold Status

VR staff members are required to verify a customer’s hold status before making payments to the:

* customer;
* parent of the customer; or
* guardian of the customer.

Payments made to a customer who is on hold are kept and held by the Comptroller’s office. This policy applies only to payments made using a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) or a Texas Identification Number (TIN) that is based on a Social Security number. Payments made in whole or in part with federal funds may be returned to TWC-VR upon submitting the required support documentation.

The Texas Identification Number System (TINS) is the system of record for accessing customer hold information. Field staff members unable to access TINS may send an email to payables.vendorholds@twc.state.tx.us mailbox with “RUSH Warrant Hold Status” in the subject line, provide the payee number, and ask if that payee number is on hold.

#### Vendor Payee’s Hold Status

This hold policy does not apply to vendors. There is no need to verify vendor (provider) hold status. The system automatically checks the hold table and identifies payments issued to vendors, individuals, and entities that have outstanding state debts.

#### Payments Subject to Warrant Hold

Information about the held payment is recorded in TINS and a Notice of State Payments Held letter is mailed to the payee. This letter advises the [payee](https://fmx.cpa.state.tx.us/fmx/pubs/hold_guide/10-glossary.php#payee) that payment is being held by the Comptroller’s office because of his or her debt to the state of Texas. The payee is advised upon receipt of this letter to contact The State of Texas Comptroller’s office at (512) 936-8138 for additional information. The letter also notifies the payee that the held warrant will be offset (applied to the liability owed) 30 days after the issue date on the Notice of State Payments Held letter if:

* the debt is not paid; or
* the warrant is not released at the request of the paying or hold source agency.

#### Holding a Payment

When a payment is issued to a payee on hold, the following actions occur:

* A warrant is printed and held at the Comptroller’s office.
* The Notice of State Payments Held letter is generated by the Comptroller’s office and mailed to the payee.
* The PYWRNT and PYWTHD screens are updated in TINS.
* The TINS 6206 and 6204 held warrant registers are generated.

When a payment is made and on hold to a payee, who is also set up for direct deposit, the direct deposit instructions are overridden, and a warrant is generated instead. The direct deposit instructions remain in suspense until the hold record is released. Direct deposit resumes automatically when the payee is released from hold, as long as the direct deposit instructions have not been deleted by the custodial agency.

#### Procedure to Release a Held Warrant

To release a warrant on hold, a TWC-VRS staff member must complete Form1777, Held Warrant Release Request, and submit it to payables.vendorholds@twc.state.tx.us for processing. Note that in the 1777 Approvals section, the requestor and approver must be two different VR staff members. When the released warrant is received, Revenue and Trust Management (RTM) mails the warrant to the address shown on the warrant unless a Special Handling request has been received before the release of the held warrant.

## D-507: Payment Scheduling, Prompt Payment, and Provider Invoicing

### D-507-1: Payment Scheduling

Texas Government Code §2155.382(d) authorizes the Comptroller to allow or require state agencies to schedule payments the Comptroller makes to a vendor. All payment transactions contain a calculated due date of 30 days, as documented by date stamps on all payment documentation, after the later of:

* date invoice received by the agency; or
* date goods and/or services received and/or completed.

#### Exemptions

Payments exempt from mandatory scheduling include:

* employee payments and/or reimbursements;
* customer maintenance payments and/or reimbursements;
* respite care reimbursements to parents and/or guardians of customers;
* Business Enterprises of Texas (BET) manager payments and/or reimbursements;
* payments made to other state agencies;
* vendor billings offering early payment discounts; and
* single invoices totaling $5,000 or less.

All other payments fall under mandatory prompt payment scheduling.

### D-507-2: Prompt Payment Act

#### Introduction

Texas Government Code, Chapter 2251, Prompt Payment Law, requires the state Comptroller's office to automatically compute and pay interest owed to vendors for late payments processed through the Uniform Statewide Accounting System (USAS).

Interest will not accrue for replacement of a warrant when the original warrant is lost or stolen. Payments reissued are:

* flagged as reissued; and
* exempt from accruing interest penalties.

TWC-VR must make every effort to avoid penalty payments. Vouchers that incur interest payments reduce the agency's available money for other purposes.

#### Deadline

The prompt payment clock begins on the later of the date:

* service performed;
* receipt of goods and/or required report received;
* a valid invoice received; or
* notification that payment by a third party (insurance carrier and/or Medicare) will not be made (for VR vouchers only).

Because this notification may occur verbally, communications with the vendor must be documented in the case record (include name of the individual spoken with and date contacted). The date payment confirmation is obtained will become the new invoice receipt date.

The payment processing period ends on the date the Comptroller mails or distributes payment.

#### Penalty for Exceeding 30 Days

The Comptroller automatically calculates interest penalty at current rate. The calculation begins on the date after payment is due, as noted above.

To verify payment due date, the Comptroller has a Prompt Payment Interest Calculator at <https://fmx.cpa.texas.gov/fm/usas/prompay/ppicalc.php>. This calculator computes the:

* payment due date; and
* amount of interest owed.

#### Payment Documentation

The office initiating payment maintains documentation for VR purchases in accordance with the published retention schedule. Documentation must include, at a minimum:

* WRAPS requisition number or service record information;
* service authorization number; and
* receipt information, including:
	+ packing slip date-stamped when received;
	+ receipt number entered into WRAPS or date receipt entered into customer system;
	+ if applicable, physician's report received and date-stamped upon receipt by the office;
	+ if applicable, Medical and Health Explanation of Benefits (EOB) date-stamped upon receipt by the office;
	+ documentation of requested services completed and accepted by TWC-VRS, including date of completion and acceptance;
	+ original vendor invoice date-stamped upon receipt by the office (if original is unavailable, the invoice of record must contain the statement "ORIGINAL INVOICE UNAVAILABLE");
	+ complete documentation on all disputed invoices; and
	+ payment voucher number.

Note: This policy applies to all payment vouchers and includes both subsystem vouchers and purchase vouchers.

## D-508: Payment After Close of a Fiscal Year and Miscellaneous Claims

After the close of the fiscal year, TWC has two additional years to process all payments for goods and services received during that state fiscal year (that is, goods and services provided during State Fiscal Year 2019 must be paid for by August 31, 2021). If payment is not processed within this time, the vendor must follow current Comptroller procedures regarding miscellaneous claims to receive payment.

Invoices for services to customers may arrive after the state fiscal year in which the purchase was authorized in RHW has ended. The procedure for paying these invoices differs depending on the amount of time that has elapsed since the end of the fiscal year in which the SA was issued.

* Invoices for SAs issued during the previous fiscal year may be paid in RHW through August 31 of the current fiscal year. These invoices must be authorized in RHW in sufficient time for the Comptroller to issue payment on or before August 31.
* For invoices for SAs issued during the year before the previous fiscal year, VR staff should send payment requests using the following procedures:
	+ Send a request for payment, along with a copy of the SA and the invoice, to VR.Budget@twc.state.tx.us. The invoice should be signed, and the payment amount should match the payment requested on the invoice.
	+ Send a separate request for each invoice for which you are requesting payment.
	+ Include the following information for each payment request:
		- SA Number
		- Cost Center
		- Approval to Pay
		- Customer Name
		- RHW Case ID
		- Amount to Pay
		- Invoice Number
		- Reason for late payment request
* Any invoice received for services and/or goods authorized before the timeframes listed above may be processed by the Comptroller’s office only upon submission of a Miscellaneous Claims application.
	+ It is the vendor’s responsibility to submit the Miscellaneous Claim Application to the Comptroller’s office. (Instructions for completion and submittal of the application are contained on the form.)
	+ Once the Comptroller’s office receives the application, it will contact the TWC Finance Division for approval of the claim.
	+ Claimants can contact the Comptroller’s office regarding all requests for miscellaneous claims at misc.claims@cpa.state.tx.us or (800) 531-5441, ext. 3-4724.

## D-509: Texas Identification Numbers and Vendor Maintenance

### D-509-1: Overview

Entities (that is, sole owner, individual recipient, partnership, corporation or other organization) billing TWC for goods or services or that receive payment for refunds or public assistance must have a Texas Identification Number (TIN). The State Comptroller requires the TIN on requests from any party receiving payment from the State of Texas. The TIN provides information about:

* who is to receive payment;
* where to send the state warrant; or
* what bank account to deposit funds.

An SA and a payment cannot be processed until the payee is established in WRAPS. WRAPS interfaces the vendor file with:

* Comptroller TINS System;
* RHW; and
* HCATS.

An active TIN is required for:

* IRS reporting;
* procurement reporting;
* contract award;
* award of SA’s; and
* payment processing.

### D-509-2: Basis of Identification Number

TINs for individual recipients (customers) are established by using random numbers assigned by the Comptroller, when based on a Social Security number (SSN).

TINs for sole owners may be established using either a:

* random number assigned by the Comptroller, when based on an SSN; or
* Federal Employers Identification Number (FEIN).

TINs for partnerships, corporations, or professional associations are established using the FEIN assigned by the IRS for tax purposes.

### D-509-3: TIN Structure

Each 14-digit TIN has the following components:

* Prefix (digit 1)
* Payee number (digits 2–10)
* Check digit (digit 11)
* Mail code (digits 12–14)

The prefix identifies the payee number type:

* 1 = FEIN issued by the IRS.
* 7 = a random number assigned by the Comptroller to be used instead of the payee's SSN when the TIN is based on an SSN.
* 3 = a number the Comptroller assigns for special purposes or temporarily when there is no FEIN or SSN.

The check digit is calculated from the TIN type and payee number. This number is used to verify the correct TIN has been entered.

The mail code is assigned by the Comptroller to identify the payment location. The mail code allows the payee to receive payments at different locations for paper warrants or into different bank accounts for electronic payments.

### D-509-4: Inquiring on a Provider

To inquire whether a provider is active in WRAPS, VR staff should email VR RHW Provider Services at vr.rhw.providerservices@twc.state.tx.us.

Provide the vendor TIN and the complete name of the vendor.