# VR-SFP Chapter 16: Project SEARCH

The following sections of the VR Standards for Providers have been revised. These requirements will take effect July 1, 2021.

## 16.1 Overview of Project SEARCH Services

Project SEARCH is an international initiative that supports partnerships among businesses (employers), local school districts, vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies, and other entities that serve individuals with disabilities, including intellectual and developmental disabilities. Project SEARCH promotes the successful long-term employment of VR customers in jobs that are stable, meaningful, integrated, and competitively compensated.

The program takes place in a business setting where total immersion in the workplace facilitates teaching and learning, and enables enrolled VR customers to develop marketable work skills and increase their employability. Each customer has the opportunity to participate in three internships to explore a variety of career paths. The customer works with a team that includes the customer's family and partnering agencies. The team helps the customer create an employment goal and supports the customer during the transition from school to work.

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## 16.3 Project SEARCH Asset Discovery

### 16.3.1 Project SEARCH Asset Discovery Service Description

The process used to collect information from a customer selected to be an intern in Project SEARCH is called "asset discovery." The skills trainer meets with the customer to collect information about the customer's skills, interests, abilities, learning styles, and support needs. The trainer also gathers information on the internship opportunities and needs of the participating host business. The skills trainer provides the information collected to the Project SEARCH team to assist in determining appropriate internships.

### 16.3.2 Project SEARCH Asset Discovery Process and Procedure

The provider receives a service authorization for asset discovery and assigns a skills trainer.

The assigned skills trainer:

* reviews the customer's Project SEARCH application;
* schedules a meeting with the customer and his or her circle of support to collect the information necessary to answer interview questions identified on the [VR3370, Project SEARCH Asset Discovery Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html); and
* completes a minimum of four observation sessions held in different locations with the customer (one-on-one sessions, group sessions with other customers, or both) for a total of at least 20 hours to observe the customer's interests, skills, abilities, challenges, and need for support. Observation sessions may be completed at:
  + the customer's home;
  + places the customer goes for recreation;
  + business sites for tour;
  + environments where the customer's work skills can be simulated; and
  + work sites where the customer does volunteer work.

Any request to change a Service Definition, Process and Procedure, or Outcomes Required for Payment must be documented and approved by the VR director using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) before the change is implemented. The approved VR3472 must be maintained in the provider’s customer case file. For more information refer to [VR-SFP 3.6.4.2 Evaluation of Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03" \l "s3-6-4).

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### 16.3.4 Fees

For more information, refer to [16.6 Project SEARCH Services Fees](https://www.twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-16" \l "s1654).

## 16.4 Project SEARCH Skills Training Services

### 16.4.1 Project SEARCH Skills Training Service Description

Project SEARCH services are based on experiential learning at a host business with support from the business and Project SEARCH team and should be provided in person. Skills Training Services include training and establishing accommodations and/or compensatory techniques as needed to increase a customer's independence and improve the customer's ability to perform soft and hard skills to meet the expectations and production standards of a host business.

When a host business will not allow interns or staff onsite for safety or other reasons, the Project SEARCH team can develop an alternate training method that can be provided after consultation is completed with the Project SEARCH Statewide Coordinator (Program Specialist for Workforce Alliances) and documented in ReHabWorks. The provider must receive a service authorization that describes how the services are to be provided when not provided in-person.

Remote services must follow VR SFP 3.6.4.1 Remote Service Delivery.

Examples of Skills Training Services include:

* providing skills training as needed throughout the internship;
* establishing compensatory techniques and accommodations; and
* training individuals who are supporting the customer at the host business.

The skills trainer must provide services in coordination with:

* a teacher with the local school district;
* a paraprofessional from the school district; and
* designated supervisors from the host business.

Skills trainers must provide goal-directed services and support as outlined in [VR3371, Project SEARCH Progress Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html).

Project SEARCH skills training is provided in person with the trainer and customer at the same location.

The customer’s VR3371 will outline the customer’s individual training goal and training needs for the identified environment the training will take place.

For more information refer to VR-SFP 3.6.4.2 Evaluation of Service Delivery.

Any request to change a Service Definition, Process and Procedure, or Outcomes Required for Payment must be documented and approved by the VR Director using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) before the change is implemented. The approved VR3472 must be maintained in the provider’s customer case file. For more information refer to [VR-SFP 3.6.4.2 Evaluation of Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03" \l "s3-6-4).

### 16.4.2 Project SEARCH Skills Training Process and Procedure

The customer, customer's legal guardian or representative, if any, VR counselor, and Project SEARCH team must meet to develop goals for the customer and document these goals on the [VR3371, Project SEARCH Progress Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html). The meeting frequency is individualized based on the customer's needs.

The skills trainer must:

* work with the customer, the customer's mentors, and the Project SEARCH team to help the customer achieve his or her goals;
* attend meetings related to the customer, as established by the Project SEARCH team, and indicate relevant customer updates on the VR3371;
* work as an active team member with the other partners to ensure that the most suitable internship is provided to enhance the customer's employability skills; and
* assist the Project SEARCH team with providing training to the host business.

No invoice may be paid until the VR counselor receives and approves a complete and accurate VR3371, Project SEARCH Progress Report, and [VR3372, Project SEARCH Internship Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), with an invoice.

### 16.4.3 Project SEARCH Skills Training Outcomes Required for Payment

[VR3371, Project SEARCH Progress Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), and [VR3372, Project SEARCH Internship Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), are submitted:

* at the conclusion of each internship rotation; and
* any time a change in the customer's needs or circumstances could affect the customer's ability to continue participating in the internships.

For payment, the skills trainer must:

* document in descriptive terms all the information required by the Service Description on the VR3371, Project SEARCH Progress Report, including:
  + evidence that goals were established and addressed for the reporting period;
  + proper recording for the date range of the start date, end date, and total hours provided during that date range;
  + summary of the services the skills trainer and Project SEARCH team provided and the customer's performance toward goals for each date range entry;
  + affirmation that at least three hours of training were provided each week for the eight–12 week internship rotation; and
  + customer satisfaction and service delivery can be verified by the customer's signature on the associated form or by VR staff contact with the customer;
* document in descriptive terms all the information required by the Service Description on the VR3372, Project SEARCH Internship Report, including:
  + information describing the current internship;
  + documentation of the customer's attendance during the internship;
  + evidence that the customer's soft and hard skills were evaluated and scored during the internship;
  + summary of the customer's performance related to essential and nonessential responsibilities;
  + summary of the customer's adjustment to the internship, including problematic issues or concerns that were addressed by the skills trainer, host business, and/or school district;
  + any accommodations, compensatory techniques, or special training the customer needs to increase performance;
  + any consultations made with the internship host business; and
  + customer satisfaction and service delivery can be verified by the customer's signature on the associated form or by VR staff contact with the customer.

For information on signatures refer to [VR-SFP 3.11.1 Documentation and Signatures](https://www.twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03#s3-11-1).

No invoice may be paid until the VR counselor receives and approves a complete, accurate, signed, and dated:

* [VR3371, Project SEARCH Progress Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html);
* [VR3372, Project SEARCH Internship Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html); and
* invoice.

### 16.4.4 Fees

For more information, refer to 16.6 Project SEARCH Services Fees.

## 16.5 Project SEARCH Job Placement

### 16.5.1 Project SEARCH Job Placement Service Description

When the customer has participated in at least one of the three internship rotations or at any time during the rotations the team determines job placement opportunities are available to the customer because of skills gained in the internships, the job placement specialist and Project SEARCH team may help the customer find employment.

The goal is to place the customer in a competitive and integrated work setting either with the host business or a business in the community that:

* meets the customer's employment goal and employment conditions; and
* allows the customer to apply his or her unique strengths, interests, abilities, and capabilities, as outlined in [VR3373, Project SEARCH Job Placement Service Plan](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html).

The customer must find and remain employed in a competitive, integrated job for 90 cumulative calendar days.

Job placement specialists are responsible for:

* providing initial instruction;
* providing assistance to reinforce learned skills;
* monitoring the customer to ensure that the customer is demonstrating the skills learned; and
* using the resources or tools necessary to assist the customer in securing employment.

Job placement specialists must make reasonable efforts to ensure that jobs are:

* permanent, rather than temporary or seasonal;
* full-time or the most hours the customer can work; and
* part of an integrated work setting.

Job placement specialists must make reasonable efforts to ensure that customers are paid:

* at or above the minimum wage; and
* not less than the customary wage that the employer pays for the same or similar work performed by employees who do not have disabilities.

Job Skills Training assistance that may be needed to ensure that the customer is stable on the job is included in the fee structure for job placement and cannot be billed separately.

Project SEARCH Job Placement Services cannot be purchased with on-the-job training services, Job Skills Training, Non-bundled Job Placement Services, Bundled Job Placement Services, Work Experience Services and/or Supported Employment.

Job placement specialists are paid once for each benchmark completed by a Project SEARCH customer, even if the customer loses a job after the completion of a benchmark.

Customers must work a minimum of 30 cumulative calendar days before achieving Benchmark C when the customer changes positions with the employer or obtains employment with another employer prior to achieving Benchmark C.

A customer's employment is considered cumulative only if any gaps in employment are not caused by the customer's disability.

Examples of disability-related issues that could cause gaps in employment include:

* hospitalization; and
* the need to manage a medical condition (such as seizures).

If a customer loses a job before the 90-day benchmark and the job loss is not due to the disability, the customer's progression within the benchmark freezes. When the customer becomes employed again, progression toward completion of the benchmark resumes.

The job placement specialist:

* verifies a customer's employment through employer or customer contact; and
* documents the verification on the appropriate form when invoicing VR.

VR verifies the dates of employment. If the verification indicates that the job placement specialist's documentation is inaccurate, VR may require recoupment of funds and pursue other options available under the contract. The final verification of employment must show that the customer has been employed a total of 90 days without a break in employment longer than eight weeks.

If the employer has classified the customer as an employee during an orientation period, the orientation period counts as part of the customer's 90 days of cumulative employment. The time spent in a Project SEARCH internship rotation cannot be included in the job placement's 90-day count.

No invoice may be paid until the VR counselor receives and approves documentation sufficient to show that the customer was placed in an organization or business that is not owned, operated, controlled, or governed by the service provider that is providing the customer's services. Providers that are state agencies, state universities, or facilities that are a part of a state university system are exempt from this requirement.

Any request to change a Service Definition, Process and Procedure, or Outcomes Required for Payment must be documented and approved by the VR Director, using the VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request, before the change is implemented. The approved VR3472 must be maintained in the provider’s customer case file. For more information refer to VR-SFP 3.6.4.2 Evaluation of Service Delivery.

### 16.5.2 Project SEARCH Job Placement Process and Procedure

#### Job Placement Planning Meeting

The customer, VR counselor, job placement specialist, and any other Project SEARCH team members, meet to develop and complete the [VR3373, Project SEARCH Job Placement Services Plan](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html):

* at the end of the third internship rotation; or
* at any time during the three rotations when the team determines job placement opportunities are available to the customer because of skills gained in the internships.

The VR3373 should only be completed one time and updated as needed.

The purpose of the meeting is to:

* review and clarify employment-related support and training that the customer needs to find employment;
* identify the customer's skills, abilities, experiences, training, education, attributes and/or barriers related to employment;
* identify negotiable and nonnegotiable employment conditions; and
* document the customer's identified employment goals and the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes for each employment goal.

Any meeting between the customer, provider, customer’s circle of supports and VR staff may be conducted remotely.

The VR Counselor will indicate on the VR3373, Project SEARCH Job Placement Services Plan, how services can be provided, either in person only or remotely and/or in person. In person services may be provided at or away from the jobsite.

Remote services must follow VR SFP 3.6.4.1 Remote Service Delivery.

All parties in attendance at the meeting must sign the VR3373 at the end of the meeting. Signatures on the V[R3373, Project SEARCH Job Placement Plan](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) may be obtained following the steps in [VR-SFP 3.11.1 Documentation and Signatures](https://www.twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03#s3-11-1).

After the Project SEARCH job placement plan meeting, VR staff:

* issues service authorization to the provider for Benchmark A; and
* files the VR3373 in the customer's file.

The service authorizations for Benchmarks B and C are issued after the customer achieves Benchmark A.

#### Job Placement

The job placement specialist uses the resources or tools necessary to help the customer find a job that meets the criteria outlined in the VR3373, Project SEARCH Job Placement Services Plan.

Once the customer is employed, the job placement specialist monitors the customer's progress on the job by:

* providing initial job coaching instruction to reinforce learned skills;
* monitoring the customer to ensure that the customer is demonstrating the skills learned and to ensure that the customer is successful; and
* determining whether there is a need for the Project SEARCH team to provide the employer with training and/or education on disability and accommodation issues.

If Job Skills Training is necessary to supplement the training provided by the employer, the Project SEARCH provider provides it as part of the Job Placement Services.

Customers must work a minimum of 30 cumulative calendar days before achieving Benchmark C when the customer changes positions with the employer or obtains employment with another employer prior to achieving Benchmark C.

Any extended support or long-term support or services that the customer needs to maintain successful long-term employment must be established by the job placement specialist and Project SEARCH team before the customer achieves Benchmark C.

### 16.5.3 Project SEARCH Job Placement Outcomes Required for Payment

For a provider to be paid for services, the job placement specialist must:

* ensure that the job meets the following, as described on the VR3373, Project SEARCH Job Placement Service Plan:
  + 100 percent of the nonnegotiable employment conditions;
  + at least 50 percent of the negotiable employment conditions;
  + the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC);
  + an employment goal; and
  + services delivered as indicated on the VR3373, Project SEARCH Job Placement Services Plan;
* accurately complete and document in descriptive terms all the information required on [VR3374, Project SEARCH Job Placement Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), at the completion of each benchmark, as follows:
  + Benchmark A is completed after the customer has completed five days of employment;
  + Benchmark B is completed after the customer has completed 45 cumulative days of employment;
  + Benchmark C is completed after the customer has completed 90 cumulative days of employment;
* accurately complete and document in descriptive terms all extended services necessary for the customer to maintain long-term competitive integrated employment after VR closes the case on the VR3374, Project SEARCH Placement Report; and
* customer satisfaction and service delivery can be verified by the customer's signature on the associated form or by VR staff contact with the customer.

For information on acceptable signatures refer to [VR-SFP 3.11.1 Documentation and Signatures](https://www.twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03#s3-11-1).

No payment may be made for the achievement of a benchmark until the VR counselor receives and approves a complete, accurate, signed, and dated:

* [VR3373, Project SEARCH Job Placement Services Plan](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html); (This form does not need to be resubmitted for Job Placement if the VR Counselor already obtained a copy earlier in the internship.)
* [VR3374, Project SEARCH Job Placement Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html); and
* invoice.

### 16.5.4 Fees

For more information, refer to 16.6 Project SEARCH Services Fees.

## 16.6 Project SEARCH Services Fees

| **Project SEARCH Services** | **Unit Rate** | **Comments** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Asset Discovery | $500 | * One time only, per customer. The [VR3370, Project SEARCH Asset Discovery](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), must be completed. * Requires 4 observations in different settings for a total of 20 hours. * Partial payments not allowed. |
| Skills Training | Must not exceed $1,375 per customer for an eight–12 week internship rotation | * No more than three rotations per customer for each school year. The [VR3371, Project SEARCH Progress Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), and [VR3372, Project SEARCH Internship Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), must be completed. * Partial payments allowed. Divide the maximum amount ($1,375) by the number of weeks in the rotation. Example: The partial payment for a 10-week rotation is $137.50 for one week. * Requires a minimum of 3 reporting hours each week per intern. |
| Job Placement and Arrangement of Retention Services (Benchmark A) | $750 | * Payable when the customer is placed in a job that meets the criteria on form [VR3373, Project SEARCH Job Placement Services Plan](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), and the customer has worked five days on the job * Submit an invoice for payment the day after the fifth day of employment. The [VR3374, Project SEARCH Job Placement Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), Benchmark A section must be completed. * Partial payments not allowed. |
| Job Placement and Arrangement of Retention Services (Benchmark B) | $750 | * Payable when the customer completes 45 cumulative calendar days of employment in a job that meets the criteria in [VR3373, Project SEARCH Job Placement Services Plan](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html). * Submit an invoice for payment the day after the 45th day of employment. The [VR3374, Project SEARCH Job Placement Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), Benchmark B section must be completed. * Partial payments not allowed. |
| Job Placement and Arrangement of Extended Services (Benchmark C) | $1,000 | * Payable when the customer completes 90 cumulative calendar days of employment in a job that meets the criteria in [VR3373, Project SEARCH Job Placement Services Plan](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), and verification that the extended services required for the customer to stay employed after VR closes the case have been arranged and documented on the VR3374, Project SEARCH Placement Report. * Submit an invoice for payment the day after the 90th day of employment. The [VR3374, Project SEARCH Job Placement Report](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), Benchmark C section must be completed. * Partial payments not allowed. * Customers must work a minimum of 30 cumulative calendar days before achieving Benchmark C when the customer changes positions with the employer or obtains employment with another employer prior to achieving Benchmark C. |