# VR Standards for Providers Chapter 18: Supported Employment Services

This following sections in the VR-SFP have been revised. **These requirements will take effect June 29, 2020.**

## 18.1 Supported Employment Overview

VR Supported Employment (SE) is a comprehensive service package for VR customers.

VR SE enables customers with the most significant disabilities to enter competitive integrated employment by:

* providing individualized assistance in finding an appropriate job match;
* providing ongoing support services; and
* establishing extended services, sometimes called long-term supports, for the customer to maintain a long-term competitive integrated employment outcome by:
	+ identifying resources to deliver the extended services;
	+ training extended services providers;
	+ confirming that extended services are in place, if needed, to make sure the job is stable; and
	+ ensuring all known needs are met before achievement of SE Benchmark 6, Service Closure.

Refer to [VRSM C-1201: Legal Authorization](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-c-1200#c-1201) for the definition of competitive integrated employment.

Before paying for VR services, the VR counselor will ensure that the customer is placed in competitive integrated employment. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) emphasizes the term "work unit" in the definition of competitive integrated employment. A work unit may refer to all employees in a job category or to a group of employees working together, depending on the employer's organizational structure (Federal Register Vol.81, at 55643). Individuals with disabilities experience differing levels of integration in various work environments, and those levels are dependent on the circumstances of the job within each work unit of an organization. Therefore, some jobs are considered to be in "integrated locations," and thus satisfy the definition of "competitive integrated employment," while others do not. If an individual with disabilities is placed with an employer that complies with a mandated direct labor-hour ratio of persons with disabilities, before benchmark payments are made, VR staff must complete a competitive integrated employment checklist to determine whether the employment is competitive integrated employment.

The VR Supported Employment Outcome-Based System uses the "Place, Then Train" model of employment placement to place customers in a job and then train them in order to help them find and keep long-term competitive integrated employment.

By being matched to a job first and then receiving ongoing supports and training, the customer develops job-readiness skills while on the job. An employer who hires a VR customer is expected to provide the same training to the VR customer as the employer would provide to other new employees, with help and support from the VR counselor and the SE specialist.

Customized employment practices develop the best job match for the customer, using flexible strategies to meet the individual's needs and the employer's unmet business needs. These practices address the unique skills, interests, abilities, capabilities, and support needs of an individual with a most significant disability. Many times, jobs must be created and/or designed with flexible strategies to allow for a suitable job match.

SE services may be used for customers with any type of disability, but a customer must:

* have a most significant disability (three or more functional limitations);
* require individualized assistance in finding an appropriate job match;
* require ongoing supports to learn the job and establish accommodations; and
* require extended services (long-term supports) to maintain the employment after VR closes the case.

A VR counselor may purchase SE when the customer has a most significant disability and:

* will benefit from the Place, Then Train model of job placement;
* needs extensive comprehensive training and support to compete in the labor market;
* needs ongoing supports to maintain an employment outcome;
* requires considerable help competing in the open job market;
* has not had competitive integrated employment or has experienced interrupted or intermittent employment; or
* is likely to be able to find and keep a competitive integrated job when necessary supports are in place.

Benchmark outcome payments are made when the provider achieves the outcomes required for each benchmark. Each benchmark is paid only once for each customer between Active Status (customer has an IPE) and Closure Status of a VR case.

The customer's job must:

* be full-time or part-time based on customer choice;
* exist in a competitive, integrated work setting; and
* be permanent, not temporary.

If a business hires a customer in a temp-to-hire position, the job is acceptable if not considered short-term or project specific employment that will end upon completion of the project. A customer can be employed by a third party such as a temp agency when this is a prerequisite for continued employment after the probationary period ends. Pro re nata (PRN) or "as needed" employment is allowed, as long as the customer can achieve all employment conditions outlined on the VR1642. VR will not accept seasonal employment placements, unless approved by the VR Director using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) form. Seasonal employment pertains to labor performed at certain seasons or periods of the year and which may not be continuous or carried out throughout the year.

VR pays for Supported Employment only if the customer is placed with an organization or business that is not owned, operated, controlled, or governed by the service provider providing the job placement service. Service providers that are state agencies, state universities, or facilities that are a part of a state university system are exempt from this requirement.

When a customer obtains a new position with the current employer or begins a new job with another employer, an updated [VR1643, Supported Employment Services Plan 2, Placement, Job Analysis, & Training Plan (SESP-2)](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), must be submitted to reflect the new position.

SE services may not exceed 24 months. Services may be extended if the customer needs additional time to reach job stabilization. [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), must be completed and submitted for approval if a customer's SE services will be provided for longer than 24 months. If an extension is granted, the SE provider receives a copy of the approved VR3472, and the VR counselor issues a new service authorization and sends it to the provider. The VR counselor and the customer must agree to extend services and document the approved extension in the customer's individualized plan for employment (IPE).

SE services must include ongoing support services, such as:

* social skills training;
* job skills training;
* observation of customer performance;
* setting up or training individuals who are the customer's natural supports or extended service providers; and
* setting up accommodations at the work site.

Ongoing support services must be provided at least twice monthly to monitor the customer at the work site and, as necessary, off-site to ensure the customer maintains successful competitive integrated employment. If under specific circumstances, especially at the request of the customer and with approval from the VR counselor, the required monitoring meetings may take place off-site, and must occur at least twice monthly. If off-site monitoring is determined to be appropriate, at least one contact with the employer each month is required.

The following VR services may not be purchased while a customer is receiving SE services from an Employment Services Provider:

* Job Development
* Bundled Job Placement
* Job Skills Training
* Non-bundled Job Placement
* On-the-Job Training (OJT)
* Personal Social Adjustment Training (PSAT)
* Vocational Adjustment Training (VAT)
* Environmental Work Assessment
* Vocational Evaluation
* Work Adjustment Training (WAT)
* Work Experience Services (WE)

## 18.2 Staff Qualifications

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