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

Revised January 15, 2021

## B-203: Initial Contact

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### B-203-2: Initial Contact Procedures

After making initial contact with a customer, the VR staff member:

1. completes the Initial Contact page in ReHabWorks (RHW);
2. assigns the case to the appropriate caseload;
3. completes or schedules the appointment to complete an application for services; and
4. provides the customer with contact information for the assigned office.

VR does not discriminate based on race, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, or religion. Refer to A-202-1: Nondiscrimination Policy for more information.

Each customer who requests an appointment to apply for VR services must receive an appointment. If the customer is homeless, VR staff completes the RHW Initial Contact page with the information that the customer provides. If the customer does not have contact information, an appointment date and time must be given to the customer at initial contact.

For additional instructions on completing the Initial Contact page , see the RHW User’s Guide [B-200: Initial Contact](https://intra.twc.texas.gov/intranet/manuals/rhwhelp/index.html).

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## B-204: Application

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### 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.

Refer to [VRSM A-210: PIN and Signature Procedures](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-a-200#a210) for more information on signatures.

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.

#### Identification in ReHabWorks

ReHabWorks (RHW) contains a Preferred Name field after the middle name on the Initial Contact page. This field is open to all customers who have a nickname they wish to be called. If a customer has not legally changed his or her name but prefers to be identified by another name, it should be documented in this field.

RHW includes the current Rehabilitation Services Administration value descriptions for gender with the following values:

* Individual indicates that he is a male.
* Individual indicates that she is a female.
* Individual did not self-identify with a particular sex.

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

At the time that the customer is applying for services, VR staff asks the customer to provide original unexpired documents that prove his or her identity and show that the customer can work legally in the United States.

Customers may provide identification and employment authorization documents:

* in-person;
* by mail; or
* remotely by using videoconference, fax, encrypted email or other secure electronic means acceptable to the customer and VR staff.

Customers who do not have verification that he or she is able to legally work in the United States are not eligible for VR services.

If a customer says that he or she is legally authorized to work in the United States, but the customer does not have the required unexpired documentation when completing the application for VR services, VR staff:

* allows the customer to complete an application for services;
* explains that the customer must provide documents verifying the customer's identification and authorization for employment before VR can determine the customer's eligibility for VR services; and
* refers the customer to the Department of Homeland Security or other local organizations that can assist the individual in obtaining the required documentation.

State driver's licenses, federal identification and other valid documents verifying the customer's identification must be current at the time of eligibility. These documents will be considered valid throughout the life of a customer's case, even if the document expires. However, if a case is closed and re-opened, the customer must provide unexpired verification of their identity.

#### SSI/SSDI Recipients

If the customer has been determined eligible for SSI/SSDI benefits because of his or her disability, he or she must provide proof of identity and current, unexpired authorization for employment documents prior to determination of eligibility for VR services. Once this documentation is received, the customer will be presumed eligible for VR services. For more information about presumption of eligibility requirements for customers who are eligible for SSI or SSDI due to a disability, see [B-300: Determining Eligibility](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-300).

#### Maintaining Authorization for Employment Documents

VR customers are responsible for providing and maintaining current employment authorization documents throughout the life of their case in order to maintain eligibility for VR services. The VR counselor must remind the customer of this requirement prior to the expiration of their documents and document this as a counseling and guidance session in a case note in RHW.

DHS maintains lists of documents a customer can use to verify their identity and/or employment authorization. The [DHS Form I-9 Acceptable Documents](https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/acceptable-documents/list-documents/form-i-9-acceptable-documents) webpage shows examples of the various documents:

#### List A – Documents that Establish Both Identity and Employment Authorization

Customers presenting an acceptable [List A document](https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/acceptable-documents/list-documents/form-i-9-acceptable-documents) should not be asked to present any other document.

#### List B – Documents that Establish Identity

The documents on [List B](https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/acceptable-documents/list-documents/form-i-9-acceptable-documents) establish only identity. Customers who present a List B document must also present a document from [List C](https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/acceptable-documents/list-documents/form-i-9-acceptable-documents).

[List B](https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/acceptable-documents/list-documents/form-i-9-acceptable-documents) includes acceptable documents for individuals under the age of 18.

#### List C – Documents that establish employment authorization.

The documents on List C establish only employment authorization. Customers who present a List C document must also present a document from [List B](https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/acceptable-documents/list-documents/form-i-9-acceptable-documents).

#### State Office Consultation Required

If a customer presents documents not listed on [DHS Form I-9 Acceptable Documents](https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/acceptable-documents/list-documents/form-i-9-acceptable-documents) to prove their identity and/or employment authorization, email the following to the state office policy team at [vrsm.support@twc.state.tx.us](mailto:vrsm.support@twc.state.tx.us):

* customer name and case ID; and
* copies of the documents presented.

If the state office policy team is not able to determine the validity of the documents, state office staff will contact TWC Office of General Counsel for review and consultation. This must be completed before the customer can be determined eligible for VR services or, if the customer is an SSI/SSDI recipient, before the IPE can be signed by the VR counselor.

After the customer's documents are determined by staff or TWC Office of General Counsel to be valid, the type and expiration of the customer's identity and employment authorization must be documented in a case note.

#### Purchasing

After the customer's identification and authorization to work are verified, the VR counselor may authorize the purchase a photo ID for the customer, if needed for the customer to find work or participate in work-related activities. For information on obtaining a Texas driver's license or ID card from the Texas Department of Public Safety, see [Apply for a Texas Driver License](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/DriverLicense/ApplyforLicense.htm).

#### Expired Employment Authorization Documents

Expired employment authorization documents cannot be used to determine customer eligibility for VR services and unexpired employment authorization documents must be maintained throughout the life of the case to maintain eligibility for VR services.

If employment authorization documents are not expired, but will expire prior to completion of IPE services, VR staff:

* tells the customer that unexpired documents are required by an employer and
* monitors status of documents to ensure that the documents do not expire.

If the customer's employment authorization documents expire while the customer is participating in VR services, the customer is no longer eligible for VR services and the case must be closed, unless the case is in employment status.

For customers who have completed all VR services and are in employment status, pending case closure, the case should remain open until it is able to be closed successfully; no additional service authorizations should be issued. However, if additional services are needed while in employment status, the employment authorization documents must be updated in RHW prior to the purchase.

Note: In the event that Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) or federal offices are closed or operating at a reduced capacity due to a public health or other safety concern, VR staff should refer to the VRD state office guidance, [DPS website](https://www.dps.texas.gov/) and [DHS Form I-9 Acceptable Documents](https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/acceptable-documents/list-documents/form-i-9-acceptable-documents) for information on accepting expired identification and work authorization documents.

#### Expired Identity Documents

Expired identity verification documents cannot be used to determine customer eligibility for VR services.

After eligibility for VR services has been determined, if the customer is a U.S. citizen and their identity verification documents (driver’s license or identification card issued by federal, state or local government agencies or entities) expire, these documents do not need to be updated to continue participation in VR services. The customer should be advised that unexpired documents will be needed by a future employer and they should be encouraged to update these in a timely manner. This can be documented as a counseling and guidance session.

However, if the customer’s case is closed for any reason and the customer reapplies for VR services in the future, they will be required to provide unexpired identify verification documents.

#### Data Corrections

If a customer’s identity or employment authorization documents have expired or the information was entered incorrectly in RHW, a VR Supervisor or VR Manager can update the record in RHW through the data correction request process.

The [VR5158, RHW Data Correction Request](https://intra.twc.texas.gov/intranet/gl/html/vocational_rehab_forms.html) form is used to request and document all RHW data corrections. A copy of this form is filed in the customer’s paper case file.

Refer to [ReHabWorks Frequently Asked Questions](https://twcgov.sharepoint.com/sites/ws/vr/VRSRHWSupp/VR%20RHW%20Support%20Resources/RHW%20FAQs.docx) for additional instructions on updating the ID and employment authorization record in RHW.

#### Copies of Documents

A copy of the customer's documents is placed in the customer's paper case file.

If the customer is reluctant to allow the documents to be copied, or if a copier is not immediately available, enter the following information in a case note for each document:

* Document title
* Issuing authority
* Document number
* Expiration date (if any)

If the customer is unable or unwilling to provide identity and employment authorization documents before the customer's eligibility determination is due, or before the customer's IPE is due for SSI or SSDI recipients, the case should be closed. The customer may reapply when he or she has the required documentation. See [B-604: Unsuccessful Closures](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-600#b604) and [B-606: Reopening a Closed Case](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-600#b606) for more information.

#### Mismatched Identification Documentation

Some individuals may have mismatched identification documentation, for example, “old” identification—with a previous name and/or gender marker—and “new” identification—with corrected name and/or gender marker. This situation is not uncommon. Such discrepancies must not prevent an individual from getting a job, participating in a program, or receiving services. For more information on documentation refer to B-502: IPE Process.

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## B-206: Opening a Case

### B-206-1: Customer Has an Open VR Case

If the customer has an open VR case in a different supervisory unit, the VR counselor clarifies whether the customer is requesting a case transfer. If the customer wants to transfer the case, see [B-100: Introduction to the VR Process](https://www.twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-100).

If the customer wants to continue receiving services through the assigned supervisory unit, the VR counselor provides the customer with the contact information for:

* the assigned unit; and
* the assigned VR counselor.

The VR counselor documents the contact in RHW.

If the customer has a closed case, see B-206-2: Opening a New Case or Adjusting the Phase of a Previously Closed Case, below.

#### Phase Adjusting the Phase of an Open Case

Any phase adjustment of an open case after an application has been completed with the exception of moving a case from employment back to active services requires approval by the Deputy Division Director for Field Services.

**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 Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE); or
  + before case assignment.

Note: If the phase adjustment request is outside of the program year, approval by the Deputy Division Director for Field Services is required.

For more information on program year, refer to the calendar on the [VR RHW Support Resources page](https://twcgov.sharepoint.com/sites/ws/vr/VRSRHWSupp/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2Fsites%2Fws%2Fvr%2FVRSRHWSupp%2FVR%20RHW%20Support%20Resources&FolderCTID=0x012000D35B10C490647A42A5D8ABD54BA20AE5).

The customer's request to apply for additional services must not be delayed or denied a 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 phase adjusted is within the current program year.

Note: If the phase adjustment request is outside of the program year, approval by the Deputy Division Director for Field Services is required.

#### 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](mailto:vr.rhwsupport@twc.state.tx.us) to phase adjust the case with VR Supervisor approval. If the phase adjustment request is outside of the program year, approval by the Deputy Division Director for Field Services is required.

#### 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](mailto:vr.rhwsupport@twc.state.tx.us) to phase adjust the case with VR Supervisor approval. If the phase adjustment request is outside of the program year, approval by the Deputy Division Director for Field Services is required.

#### 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](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-600))
2. Updates the employment information in RHW (see [B-600: Closure and Post-Employment Services](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-600))
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](mailto:vr.rhwsupport@twc.state.tx.us) to phase adjust the case with VR Supervisor approval. If the phase adjustment request is outside of the program year, approval by the Deputy Division Director for Field Services is required.

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](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-600))
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](mailto:vr.rhwsupport@twc.state.tx.us) to phase adjust the case with VR Supervisor approval. If the phase adjustment request is outside of the program year, approval by the Deputy Division Director for Field Services is required.

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