

1 **CHAPTER 856. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES**

2  
3 **PROPOSED RULES TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE *TEXAS REGISTER*. THIS**  
4 **DOCUMENT WILL HAVE NO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES BUT IS SUBJECT TO**  
5 **FORMATTING CHANGES AS REQUIRED BY THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**  
6 **OF STATE.**

7  
8 The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) proposes amendments to the following sections of  
9 Chapter 856, relating to Vocational Rehabilitation Services:

- 10  
11 Subchapter A. Vocational Rehabilitation Services: Program and Purpose, §856.1 and
- 12 §856.3
- 13 Subchapter B. Eligibility, §§856.20, 856.40, 856.41, 856.45, 856.50, 856.52, 856.53, and
- 14 856.56
- 15 Subchapter C. Provision of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, §856.57
- 16 Subchapter D. Customer Participation, §856.59
- 17 Subchapter E. Comparable Benefits, §856.71
- 18 Subchapter G. Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center, §856.84

19  
20 **PART I. PURPOSE, BACKGROUND, AND AUTHORITY**

21 On October 17, 2017, TWC adopted rules under 40 TAC Chapter 856 to align with the  
22 integration of TWC, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and Blind Services. Further  
23 amendments to Chapter 856 were adopted on July 31, 2018, to incorporate the Criss Cole  
24 Rehabilitation Center.

25  
26 The purpose of the proposed amendments to Chapter 856 is to address stakeholder comments,  
27 clarify existing rules, improve consistency with federal regulations, and increase efficiency of  
28 program operations.

29  
30 Texas Government Code, §2001.039 requires that every four years each state agency review and  
31 consider for reoption, revision, or repeal each rule adopted by that agency. TWC conducted a  
32 rule review of Chapter 856 and proposes changes to clarify the rule language and improve  
33 program services. Those changes are described in Part II of this preamble.

34  
35 **PART II. EXPLANATION OF INDIVIDUAL PROVISIONS**

36 (Note: Minor editorial changes are made that do not change the meaning of the rules and,  
37 therefore, are not discussed in the Explanation of Individual Provisions.)

38  
39 **SUBCHAPTER A. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES: PROGRAM AND**  
40 **PURPOSE**

41 TWC proposes the following amendments to Subchapter A:

42  
43 **§856.1. Purpose**

44 Section 856.1 is amended to add additional language to better align with Workforce Innovation  
45 and Opportunity Act.

1 **§856.3. Definitions**

2 Section 856.3 is amended to add definitions for "academic training" and "vocational  
3 rehabilitation counselor."  
4

5 **SUBCHAPTER B. ELIGIBILITY**

6 TWC proposes the following amendments to Subchapter B:  
7

8 **§856.20. Eligibility**

9 Section 856.20 is amended to include additional language to better align with 34 Code of Federal  
10 Regulations (CFR) §361.42.  
11

12 **§856.40. Provision of Services**

13 Section 856.40 is amended to rename the section "Provision of Goods and Services" to better  
14 describe the section's content.  
15

16 Section 856.40 is amended to include additional language to better align with 34 CFR §361.45.  
17

18 **§856.41. Comprehensive Assessment**

19 Section 856.41 is amended to clarify the criteria used for comprehensive assessments and to  
20 clarify that certain types of assessments are not mandatory but are completed as appropriate to  
21 identify vocational rehabilitation needs and determine the services necessary to meet the  
22 customer's employment goal.  
23

24 **§856.45. Vocational and Other Training Services**

25 Section 856.45 is amended to clarify that training at a vocational or technical school is not  
26 required to occur in Texas, to clarify exceptions for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or  
27 Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) recipients, and to remove current §856.45(c)(9) as  
28 this was added in the "academic training" definition, as well as §856.45(e), which precludes the  
29 Vocational Rehabilitation Division from paying tuition and fees to a business, technical, or  
30 vocational school above the published fees.  
31

32 **§856.50. Post-Employment Services**

33 Section 856.50 is amended to better align with 34 CFR §361.5(c)(41).  
34

35 **§856.52. Individualized Plan for Employment**

36 Section 856.52 is amended to increase efficiency in customer notifications.  
37

38 **§856.53. Customers Determined to Have Achieved Employment Outcome**

39 Section 856.53 is amended to remove §856.53(b) as post-employment services are covered in  
40 §856.50.  
41

42 **§856.56. Assistive Technology Devices**

43 Section 856.56 is amended to remove the reference to cost.  
44

45 **SUBCHAPTER C. PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES**

46 TWC proposes the following amendments to Subchapter C:

1  
2 **§856.57. Alternative Purchasing Methods - Rates for Medical Services**

3 Section 856.57 is amended to increase efficiency in the process of establishing rates for medical  
4 services by adding that TWC's executive director or deputy executive director may establish the  
5 rates annually based on the standards adopted by TWC's three-member Commission. Section  
6 856.57 is also amended to include the process for providing the notice of the proposed schedule  
7 of rates for public comment.  
8

9 **SUBCHAPTER D. CUSTOMER PARTICIPATION**

10 TWC proposes the following amendments to Subchapter D:  
11

12 **§856.59. Purpose of Customer Participation**

13 Section 856.59 is amended to clarify that customers may need to participate in the cost of  
14 services based on their financial need unless the customer is a recipient of Social Security  
15 benefits, either SSI or SSDI.  
16

17 **SUBCHAPTER E. COMPARABLE BENEFITS**

18 TWC proposes the following amendments to Subchapter E:  
19

20 **§856.71. Availability of Comparable Services and Benefits**

21 Section 856.71 is amended to include additional language to better align with 34 CFR  
22 §361.53(a)(1).  
23

24 **SUBCHAPTER G. CRISS COLE REHABILITATION CENTER**

25 TWC proposes the following amendments to Subchapter G:  
26

27 **§856.84. Initial Eligibility**

28 Section 856.84 is amended to remove the requirement that a customer is a Texas resident.  
29

30 **PART III. IMPACT STATEMENTS**

31 Chris Nelson, Chief Financial Officer, determined that for each year of the first five years the  
32 rules will be in effect, the following statements will apply:  
33

34 There are no additional estimated costs to the state and to local governments expected as a result  
35 of enforcing or administering the rules.  
36

37 There are no estimated cost reductions to the state and to local governments as a result of  
38 enforcing or administering the rules.  
39

40 There are no estimated losses or increases in revenue to the state or to local governments as a  
41 result of enforcing or administering the rules.  
42

43 There are no foreseeable implications relating to costs or revenue of the state or local  
44 governments as a result of enforcing or administering the rules.  
45

46 There are no anticipated economic costs to individuals required to comply with the rules.

1  
2 There is no anticipated adverse economic impact on small businesses, microbusinesses, or rural  
3 communities as a result of enforcing or administering the rules.  
4

5 Based on the analyses required by Texas Government Code, §2001.024, TWC determined that  
6 the requirement to repeal or amend a rule, as required by Texas Government Code, §2001.0045,  
7 does not apply to this rulemaking.  
8

#### 9 Takings Impact Assessment

10 Under Texas Government Code, §2007.002(5), "taking" means a governmental action that  
11 affects private real property, in whole or in part or temporarily or permanently, in a manner that  
12 requires the governmental entity to compensate the private real property owner as provided by  
13 the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution or the Texas  
14 Constitution, Article I, §17 or §19, or restricts or limits the owner's right to the property that  
15 would otherwise exist in the absence of the governmental action, and is the producing cause of a  
16 reduction of at least 25 percent in the market value of the affected private real property,  
17 determined by comparing the market value of the property as if the governmental action is not in  
18 effect and the market value of the property determined as if the governmental action is in effect.  
19 TWC completed a Takings Impact Analysis for the proposed rulemaking action under Texas  
20 Government Code, §2007.043. The primary purpose of this proposed rulemaking action, as  
21 discussed elsewhere in this preamble, is to address stakeholder comments, clarify existing rules,  
22 improve consistency with federal regulations, and increase efficiency of program operations.  
23

24 The proposed rulemaking action will not create any additional burden on private real property or  
25 affect private real property in a manner that would require compensation to private real property  
26 owners under the United States Constitution or the Texas Constitution. The proposal also will  
27 not affect private real property in a manner that restricts or limits an owner's right to the property  
28 that would otherwise exist in the absence of the governmental action. Therefore, the proposed  
29 rulemaking will not cause a taking under Texas Government Code, Chapter 2007.  
30

#### 31 Government Growth Impact Statement

32 TWC determined that during the first five years the rules will be in effect, they:

- 33 --will not create or eliminate a government program;
- 34 --will not require the creation or elimination of employee positions;
- 35 --will not require an increase or decrease in future legislative appropriations to TWC;
- 36 --will not require an increase or decrease in fees paid to TWC;
- 37 --will not create a new regulation;
- 38 --will not expand, limit, or eliminate an existing regulation;
- 39 --will not change the number of individuals subject to the rules; and
- 40 --will not positively or adversely affect the state's economy.

#### 41 42 Economic Impact Statement and Regulatory Flexibility Analysis

43 TWC determined that the rules will not have an adverse economic impact on small businesses or  
44 rural communities, as the proposed rules place no requirements on small businesses or rural  
45 communities.  
46

1 Mariana Vega, Director, Labor Market Information, determined that there is not a significant  
2 negative impact upon employment conditions in the state as a result of the rules.

3  
4 Cheryl Fuller, Director, Vocational Rehabilitation Division, determined that for each year of the  
5 first five years the rules are in effect, the public benefit anticipated as a result of enforcing the  
6 proposed rules will be to clarify rules, improve consistency with federal regulations, and increase  
7 efficiency of program operations.

8  
9 TWC hereby certifies that the proposal has been reviewed by legal counsel and found to be  
10 within TWC's legal authority to adopt.

11  
12 **PART IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

13 Comments on the proposed rules may be submitted to [TWCPolicyComments@twc.texas.gov](mailto:TWCPolicyComments@twc.texas.gov)  
14 and must be received no later than October 3, 2022.

15  
16 **PART V. STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

17 The rules are proposed under Texas Labor Code, Chapter 352 and Texas Human Resources  
18 Code, Chapter 111, which provide TWC with the authority to adopt, amend, or repeal such rules  
19 as it deems necessary for the effective administration of vocational rehabilitation services.

20  
21 The proposed rules affect Texas Human Resources Code, Chapter 111, and Texas Labor Code,  
22 Chapter 352.

1                                   **CHAPTER 856. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES**

2  
3                   **SUBCHAPTER A. ~~VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES:~~ PROGRAM AND**  
4                   **PURPOSE**

5  
6                   **§856.1. Purpose.**

7  
8                   The Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program is a joint state- and federal-funded  
9                   program administered by the ~~Agency's Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)~~, Vocational  
10                  Rehabilitation Division (VRD) to assess, plan, develop, and provide vocational  
11                  rehabilitation services for eligible individuals with disabilities, consistent with their  
12                  unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and  
13                  informed choice so that these individuals can prepare for and engage in competitive  
14                  integrated employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency. The Vocational  
15                  Rehabilitation Services Program seeks to empower individuals with disabilities to  
16                  maximize employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion in and  
17                  integration into society. In accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended,  
18                  ~~VRD the Vocational Rehabilitation Division~~ is the single designated state unit for the  
19                  Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program ~~VR program.~~

20  
21                  **§856.3. Definitions.**

22  
23                  In addition to the definitions contained in Texas Labor Code, §352.001 and 34 Code of  
24                  Federal Regulations ~~CFR~~ §361.5 ~~vocational rehabilitation~~, the following words and terms,  
25                  when used in this chapter, shall have the following meanings.

26  
27                  (1) Academic training--A postsecondary program of organized instruction or study  
28                  that may lead to an academic, professional, or vocational degree, certificate, or  
29                  other recognized educational credential. Academic training does not include  
30                  continuing education required for maintaining certification in a field in which  
31                  the customer is already gainfully employed.

32  
33                  (2)(+) Applicant--An individual who applies to the Vocational Rehabilitation  
34                  Division ~~VRD~~ for vocational rehabilitation services.

35  
36                  (3)(2) Blind--An individual having not more than 20/200 visual acuity in the better  
37                  eye with correcting lenses or visual acuity greater than 20/200 but with a  
38                  limitation in the field of vision such that the widest diameter of the visual field  
39                  subtends an angle no greater than 20 degrees.

40  
41                  (4)(3) Customer--An individual with a disability who has applied for or is  
42                  receiving vocational rehabilitation services.

43  
44                  (5)(4) Visually Impaired--A visual acuity of not more than 20/70 in the better eye  
45                  with correcting lenses, or visual acuity greater than 20/70 but with a limitation  
46                  in the field of vision such that the widest diameter of the visual field subtends

1 an angle no greater than 30 degrees.

2  
3 (6) Vocational rehabilitation counselor--An Agency employee who is trained to  
4 provide vocational guidance and counseling and meets the minimum  
5 qualifications designated in a functional job description.  
6

## 7 SUBCHAPTER B. ELIGIBILITY

### 8 §856.20. Eligibility.

- 9
- 10
- 11 (a) The Vocational Rehabilitation Division (VRD) bases eligibility for vocational  
12 rehabilitation (VR) services on the following requirements only.
- 13
- 14 (b) Within 60 days of application, a VR counselor~~VRD~~ must:
- 15
- 16 (1) determine that the applicant has a physical or mental impairment;
- 17
- 18 (2) determine that the impairment constitutes or results in a substantial  
19 impediment to employment for the applicant;
- 20
- 21 (3) establish that the applicant requires VR services to prepare for, secure~~enter,~~  
22 ~~engage in, or~~ retain, advance in, or regain~~gainful~~ employment that is consistent  
23 with the applicant's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities,  
24 capabilities, interests, and informed choice; and
- 25
- 26 (4) presume that the applicant is capable of achieving an employment outcome;  
27 unless there is a demonstration by clear and convincing evidence in trial work  
28 that the applicant is incapable of achieving an employment outcome because of  
29 the severity of the applicant's disability.
- 30
- 31 (c) Social Security disability recipients and beneficiaries are presumed eligible for VR  
32 services; unless there is a demonstration by clear and convincing evidence in trial  
33 work that the applicant is incapable of achieving an employment outcome because of  
34 the severity of the applicant's disability.
- 35
- 36 (d) Eligibility or ineligibility must be determined no later than 60 days after the  
37 applicant, or the applicant's representative, as appropriate, has signed and submitted  
38 an application for VR services in accordance with the provisions of §856.19 of this  
39 subchapter (relating to Application).
- 40
- 41 (e) Exceptions to the 60-day time frame for determining eligibility or ineligibility may  
42 occur only when:
- 43
- 44 (1) VRD notifies the applicant that unforeseen circumstances beyond the control  
45 of VRD preclude it from completing the determination in 60 days;
- 46

- 1 (2) the applicant, or the applicant's representative, as appropriate, agrees to a  
2 specific extension of time; or  
3  
4 (3) VRD requires further time exploring an applicant's abilities, capabilities, and  
5 capacity to perform in work situations through trial work.  
6

- 7 (f) Eligibility must be determined before applying Subchapter F of this chapter ([relating](#)  
8 [to Methods of Administration of Vocational Rehabilitation](#)), if appropriate, (~~relating~~  
9 ~~to Methods of Administration of Vocational Rehabilitation~~) and Subchapter D of this  
10 chapter (relating to Customer Participation).  
11

12 **§856.40. Provision of [Goods and Services](#).**  
13

- 14 (a) ~~The Vocational Rehabilitation Division~~VRD, as appropriate to the vocational  
15 rehabilitation needs of each eligible individual, provides goods and services  
16 necessary to render a customer employable, subject to certain limitations prescribed  
17 in this subchapter and Subchapters D and E of this chapter (relating to Customer  
18 Participation; and Comparable Benefits).  
19  
20 (b) Services are provided only as planned in advance and set forth in the customer's  
21 individualized plan for employment (IPE). [The IPE must be designed to achieve a](#)  
22 [specific employment outcome that is selected by the individual consistent with the](#)  
23 [individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities,](#)  
24 [interests, and informed choice.](#)  
25

26 **§856.41. Comprehensive Assessment.**  
27

- 28 (a) After a customer has been ~~determined~~~~found~~ eligible [for vocational rehabilitation](#)  
29 [services, the Vocational Rehabilitation Division \(VRD\) conducts assessments](#)  
30 [usingutilizing the criteria in subsection \(b\) of this section](#) for vocational  
31 rehabilitation needs and, if necessary, rehabilitation technology needs for each  
32 customer in order to develop an [individualized plan for employment \(IPE\)](#) that is  
33 designed to achieve the customer's employment outcome.  
34  
35 (b) ~~ToIf more information is needed to~~ determine the appropriate employment outcome  
36 and services required to achieve it, VRD, as appropriate in each case, [may](#)  
37 [conductconducts](#) an assessment of the customer's unique strengths, resources,  
38 priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and needs, including the need for  
39 supported employment services, in the most integrated setting possible, consistent  
40 with the informed choice of the customer.  
41  
42 (c) The assessment is limited to information that is necessary to identify the customer's  
43 rehabilitation needs and develop the IPE and may, to the extent needed, include:  
44  
45 (1) an analysis of medical, psychological, vocational, educational, and other  
46 related factors that bear on the customer's impediment to employment



1 and rehabilitation needs. Additional examinations are authorized after  
2 services are initiated when conditions arise that jeopardize the customer's  
3 IPE;

- 4
- 5 (2) an analysis of the customer's personality, career interests, interpersonal  
6 skills, intelligence and related functional capacities, educational  
7 achievement, work experience, vocational aptitudes, personal and social  
8 adjustments, and employment opportunities;
- 9
- 10 (3) an appraisal of the customer's patterns of work behavior and services  
11 needed to acquire occupational skills and to develop work attitudes,  
12 work habits, work tolerance, and social and behavioral patterns suitable  
13 for successful job performance; and
- 14
- 15 (4) an assessment, through provision of rehabilitation technology services,  
16 of the customer's capacities to perform in a work environment, including  
17 in an integrated setting, to the maximum extent feasible and consistent  
18 with the customer's informed choice.
- 19

- 20 (d) VRD uses, to the maximum extent possible and appropriate and in accordance with  
21 confidentiality requirements, existing information, including information that is  
22 provided by the customer, the family of the customer, and education agencies.
- 23

24 **§856.45. Vocational and Other Training Services.**

25

- 26 (a) [The Vocational Rehabilitation Division \(VRD\)](#) purchases vocational and other  
27 training services for customers who require additional knowledge or skills to enter  
28 employment consistent with their aptitudes and ability, and compatible with their  
29 physical or mental impairments.
- 30
- 31 (b) VRD purchases vocational and other training services through an appropriate  
32 facility. These facilities include accredited colleges and universities, certified public  
33 or private businesses, technical and vocational schools, on-the-job training,  
34 correspondence course training, tutorial training, and community rehabilitation  
35 program training.
- 36
- 37 (c) Academic training in institutions of higher education (universities, colleges,  
38 community or junior colleges, vocational schools, technical institutes, or hospital  
39 schools of nursing) is subject to the following:
- 40
- 41 (1) Academic training in [proprietary](#) vocational schools and technical  
42 institutes must be provided only in schools that are [licensed or certified](#)  
43 [by the Agency TWC on the Licensed Career Schools and Colleges](#)  
44 [Directory website, the Eligible Training Provider System website, or](#)  
45 [another regulatory agency, before including the training on the](#)  
46 [individualized plan for employment certified by the State of Texas.](#)

- 1
- 2 (2) No vocational rehabilitation (VR) funds may be used to pay for
- 3 academic training unless VRD and the customer have made maximum
- 4 efforts to secure grant assistance in whole or in part from other sources
- 5 to pay for the training.
- 6
- 7 (3) The PELL grant, like any other comparable services and benefits, must
- 8 be applied to the educational process before the expenditure of VRD
- 9 funds for services under this section. Services must not be denied
- 10 pending receipt of a PELL grant, but must be contingent upon the
- 11 customer's making application if eligible.
- 12
- 13 (4) Academic training must be provided through public, tax-supported
- 14 colleges and universities in Texas unless:
- 15
- 16 (A) a specific curriculum related to the customer's academic major is
- 17 not available at a Texas public institution;
- 18
- 19 (B) academic training elsewhere is determined to be more economical;
- 20 or
- 21
- 22 (C) academic training elsewhere provides specialized services needed
- 23 by the customer.
- 24
- 25 (5) If the customer chooses to obtain academic training at a private college
- 26 or university in Texas or at a college or university outside Texas and the
- 27 provisions in paragraph (4) of this subsection do not apply, academic
- 28 support must be limited to that which the customer would receive if he
- 29 or she attended a state-supported college or university in Texas, unless
- 30 the customer is a recipient of Social Security benefits, either
- 31 Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability
- 32 Insurance (SSDI).
- 33
- 34 (6) A customer who is blind, does not meet the residency requirements of a
- 35 particular institution, and is not eligible for tuition exemption under
- 36 Texas Education Code, §54.364 may receive VRD tuition assistance
- 37 based on the customer's economic need. Unless the customer is a
- 38 recipient of Social Security benefits, either SSI or SSDI, but the
- 39 payments must not exceed the tuition paid for a customer who does meet
- 40 the residency requirements.
- 41
- 42 (7) Tuition and fee exemption is an exemption from payment of tuition
- 43 and/or required fees normally charged by a state-supported college or
- 44 university. Required fees include student services, building use, health
- 45 center use, lab fees, and property deposits not reimbursable to the
- 46 student. Required fees do not include optional fees.

1  
2 (8) Any equipment purchased for the customer during academic training  
3 must be needed by the customer to help maintain academic success so  
4 that the customer can meet the employment outcome.  
5

6 ~~(9) Academic training does not include continuing education required for~~  
7 ~~maintaining certification in a field in which the customer is already~~  
8 ~~gainfully employed.~~  
9

10 (9)(10) Once admitted to academic training:

11  
12 (A) the customer must maintain and complete a full-time course load as  
13 defined by the school or educational institution ~~college or university~~.  
14 This requirement may be waived if:

15  
16 (i) the customer is a graduating senior;

17  
18 (ii) the customer is an incoming freshman (first two semesters or  
19 quarters);

20  
21 (iii) the customer is a returning adult (first academic year only);

22  
23 (iv) the customer is in summer school; or

24  
25 (v) other extenuating circumstances prevent the customer from  
26 participating in a full-time course load; and  
27

28 (B) the customer is required to meet with the VR counselor at least once  
29 each semester, to submit add or drop slips as changes occur, and to  
30 provide grade slips or transcripts to the VR counselor at the end of  
31 each semester.  
32

33 (d) VRD requires that each customer who is provided with vocational or other training  
34 services by VRD apply for financial assistance where reasonably available. This  
35 assistance can include federal, state, or local grants-in-aid and private scholarships  
36 where applicable. If the customer has not done so before the time of application for  
37 vocational rehabilitation services, the VR counselor assists the customer in doing so.  
38

39 ~~(e) VRD does not pay tuition and fees to a business, technical, or vocational school in~~  
40 ~~excess of the published fees.~~  
41

#### 42 §856.50. Post-Employment Services.

43  
44 (a) The Vocational Rehabilitation Division ~~VRD~~ may provide post-employment services  
45 to customers ~~who have been determined rehabilitated~~ in order to maintain or  
46 strengthen the customer's employment. A customer may be considered for post-

1 employment services if he or she has an employment-related problem that does not  
2 entail a complex rehabilitation effort or address a new and distinct substantial  
3 impediment to employment.  
4

- 5 (b) Post-employment services are services that are necessary for the customer to  
6 maintain, regain, or advance in an employment outcome that is consistent with the  
7 customer's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests,  
8 and informed choice.

9  
10 ~~(c) Post-employment services must be related to the previously planned employment~~  
11 ~~outcome.~~  
12

### 13 **§856.52. Individualized Plan for Employment.**

- 14  
15 (a) [The Vocational Rehabilitation Division \(VRD\)](#) initiates and continuously develops an  
16 individualized plan for employment (IPE) for each individual eligible for vocational  
17 rehabilitation ([VR](#)) services and for each individual being provided such services in  
18 trial work. All IPEs must be written using the form prescribed by VRD for this  
19 purpose.  
20
- 21 (b) VRD advises the customer or, the customer's parent, guardian, or other  
22 representative, as appropriate, of the customer's options and all VRD procedures and  
23 requirements affecting the development and review of an IPE, including the  
24 availability of special modes of communication.  
25
- 26 (c) The VR counselor and customer or, as appropriate, the customer's parent, guardian,  
27 or other representative, uses information obtained during the assessment to help the  
28 customer make informed choices about ~~VR~~[vocational rehabilitation](#) needs,  
29 employment outcome, intermediate rehabilitation objectives, and the nature and  
30 scope of ~~VR~~[vocational rehabilitation](#) services and the service providers to be  
31 included in the IPE.  
32
- 33 (d) The VR counselor must provide the customer or, as appropriate, the customer's  
34 representative, with a copy of the IPE and its amendments, in the mode of  
35 communication specified by the customer or representative.  
36
- 37 (e) All substantive revisions necessary to reflect changes in the customer's employment  
38 outcome, specific ~~VR~~[vocational rehabilitation](#) services, service providers, and the  
39 methods used to procure services must be incorporated into the customer's IPE.  
40
- 41 (f) The customer may develop all or part of the IPE with assistance from the ~~VRD~~ VR  
42 counselor, a qualified [vocational rehabilitation](#) ~~VR~~ counselor not employed by VRD,  
43 or another resource outside VRD. VRD does not pay for non-VRD assistance with  
44 IPE development. The IPE is not final until approved by the ~~VRD~~ VR counselor. A  
45 copy of the plan and any amendments are provided to the customer or the customer's  
46 parent, guardian, or other representative, as appropriate.

1  
2 (g) The data used to prepare the IPE must include the information necessary to satisfy  
3 federal requirements and to adequately document the customer's plan of services.  
4 Regardless of the approach selected by the customer to develop the IPE, the IPE  
5 must, at a minimum, contain the following mandatory components:  
6

7 (1) a description of the customer's specific employment outcome;  
8

9 (2) a description of the specific ~~VR~~ ~~vocational rehabilitation~~ services that are  
10 needed to achieve the employment outcome, including, as appropriate, the  
11 provision of assistive technology devices and assistive technology services;  
12 personal assistance services, including training in the management of those  
13 services; and timelines for initiating the services and for achieving the  
14 employment outcome;  
15

16 (3) a description of the entity chosen by the customer or, as appropriate, the  
17 customer's representative, that will provide the ~~VR~~ ~~vocational rehabilitation~~  
18 services, and the methods used to procure the services;  
19

20 (4) a description of criteria to evaluate progress toward achievement of the  
21 employment outcome;  
22

23 (5) the terms and conditions of the IPE, including, as appropriate, information  
24 describing:  
25

26 (A) VRD responsibilities; and  
27

28 (B) customer responsibilities, including:  
29

30 (i) the customer's responsibilities related to his or her employment  
31 outcome;  
32

33 (ii) if applicable, the customer's participation in paying for the costs of  
34 the plan;  
35

36 (iii) the customer's responsibility to apply for and secure comparable  
37 benefits; and  
38

39 (iv) the responsibilities of other entities resulting from arrangements  
40 made under comparable services or benefits;  
41

42 (6) for a customer with the most significant disabilities for whom an employment  
43 outcome in a supported employment setting has been determined to be  
44 appropriate, information identifying:  
45

46 (A) the extended services that the customer needs; and

1  
2 (B) the source of extended services or, if the source of the extended services  
3 cannot be identified at the time that the IPE is developed, a description of  
4 the basis for a reasonable expectation that a source will become  
5 available; and  
6

7 (7) as determined to be necessary, a statement of projected need for post-  
8 employment services.  
9

10 (h) In developing an IPE for a student with a disability who is receiving special  
11 education services, VRD must consider the student's individualized education  
12 program.  
13

14 (i) The VR counselor must advise the customer of the customer's rights and the means  
15 by which the customer may express and seek remedy for dissatisfaction with the  
16 plan, including the opportunity for an administrative review of VRD action and a fair  
17 hearing in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, Texas Government  
18 Code, Chapter 2001, and the rules in Chapter 850 of this title (relating to Vocational  
19 Rehabilitation Services Administrative Rules and Procedures).  
20

21 (j) The VR counselor reviews the IPE as often as necessary, but on at least an annual  
22 basis, at which time the customer or the customer's parent, guardian, or other  
23 representative, as appropriate, is afforded an opportunity to review the plan and, if  
24 necessary, jointly redevelop its terms.  
25

26 (k) The IPE is a joint commitment that must be signed by both the VR counselor and the  
27 customer.  
28

29 (l) VRD may provide only goods and services that are reasonable and necessary to  
30 achieve the employment outcome identified in the customer's IPE~~customer IPEs~~.

31  
32 (m) Before suspending, reducing, or terminating any planned service in the IPE, VRD  
33 shall provide~~send written~~ notification of intent to the customer~~customer's last known~~  
34 address.  
35

36 (n) VRD must suspend, reduce, or terminate the customer's planned services no sooner  
37 than 10 working days after ~~written~~ notice has been provided~~mailed~~ to the customer.  
38

39 **§856.53. Customers Determined to Have Achieved Employment Outcome.**  
40

41 ~~(a)~~ The Vocational Rehabilitation Division~~VRD~~ determines a customer to have achieved  
42 an employment outcome when the following requirements are met:  
43

44 (1) the provision of services under the customer's individualized plan for  
45 employment (IPE) has contributed to the achievement of the employment  
46 outcome;

- 1  
2 (2) the customer has achieved the employment outcome that is described in the  
3 customer's IPE and that is consistent with the customer's strengths, resources,  
4 priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice;  
5  
6 (3) the employment outcome is in an integrated setting;  
7  
8 (4) the customer has maintained the employment outcome for at least 90 days; and  
9  
10 (5) the customer and the [vocational rehabilitation](#)VR counselor consider the  
11 employment outcome to be satisfactory and agree that the customer is  
12 performing well on the job.  
13

14 ~~(b) After a customer has been determined to have achieved an employment outcome,~~  
15 ~~VRD may provide post-employment services as required to maintain, regain, or~~  
16 ~~advance in employment.~~  
17

#### 18 **§856.56. Assistive Technology Devices.**

19

- 20 (a) Assistive technology devices are purchased only after evaluation of the customer's  
21 need ~~and the cost~~. Simple and less expensive alternatives must be considered first.  
22  
23 (b) The customer must return to [the Vocational Rehabilitation Division](#)VRD any  
24 assistive technology device no longer needed for training, employment, or pursuit of  
25 employment.  
26

### 27 **SUBCHAPTER C. PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES**

28

#### 29 **§856.57. Alternative Purchasing Methods - Rates for Medical Services.**

30

31 Under Texas Labor Code, §352.054, this [section sets forth the](#)rule-adopts standards  
32 governing the determination of rates paid for medical services provided by the Agency.  
33 The rates determined under these standards are reevaluated annually:  
34

- 35 (1) Rates shall be established based on Medicare and Medicaid schedules for  
36 current procedural terminology. Where Medicare and Medicaid schedules are  
37 not applicable, rates that represent best value shall be established based on  
38 factors that include reasonable and customary industry standards for each  
39 specific service.  
40  
41 (2) Rates shall be established at a level adequate to ensure that enough qualified  
42 providers are available to provide assessment and treatment within a  
43 geographic distribution that reflects customer or claimant distribution.  
44

1           (3) Notification of the proposed schedule of rates shall be published in the *Texas*  
2           *Register* to allow interested persons to present comments to the Agency before  
3           the rates are established.

4  
5           (4) After the reevaluation process is completed in accordance with the  
6           requirements in paragraphs (1) and (2) of this section, the Agency's executive  
7           director or deputy executive director may establish the rates for medical  
8           services.

9  
10          (5)(3) Exceptions to established rates may be made on a case-by-case basis by the  
11          Agency's medical director or optometric consultant.

## 12 13 **SUBCHAPTER D. CUSTOMER PARTICIPATION**

### 14 15 **§856.59. Purpose of Customer Participation.**

- 16  
17          (a) Establishing customer participation in service costs encourages customer  
18          commitment to an employment outcome, creates a cooperative relationship between  
19          the customer and the Vocational Rehabilitation Division (VRD), and maximizes  
20          VRD's limited funds.  
21  
22          (b) VRD ~~may require~~requires customers to participate in the cost of services based on  
23          financial need, unless the customer is a recipient of Social Security benefits, either  
24          Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance.

## 25 26 **SUBCHAPTER E. COMPARABLE BENEFITS**

### 27 28 **§856.71. Availability of Comparable Services and Benefits.**

- 29  
30          (a) If comparable services or benefits exist under any other program and are available to  
31          the customer at the time needed to achieve the employment outcome in the  
32          customer's individualized plan for employment (IPE), the Vocational Rehabilitation  
33          Division (VRD) must use those comparable services or benefits to meet, in whole or  
34          in part, the cost of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services.  
35  
36          (b) If comparable services or benefits exist under any other program, but are not  
37          available to the customer at the time necessary to satisfy the employment outcome in  
38          the consumer's IPE, VRD must provide VR services until those comparable services  
39          and benefits become available.  
40  
41          (c) The following services are exempt from determination of the availability of  
42          comparable services and benefits:  
43  
44                  (1) assessment for determining eligibility and priority for services;  
45  
46                  (2) assessment for determining VR needs;



- 1  
2 (3) VR counseling, guidance, and referral services;  
3  
4 (4) placement services;  
5  
6 (5) rehabilitation technology services; and  
7  
8 (6) post-employment services consisting of the services listed under paragraphs  
9 (1) - (5) of this subsection.

10  
11 (d) The requirements of subsection (a) of this section also do not apply if such a  
12 determination would interrupt or delay:

- 13  
14 (1) the progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome  
15 identified in the IPE;  
16  
17 (2) an immediate job placement; or  
18  
19 (3) the provision of VR services to any individual who is determined to be at  
20 extreme medical risk, based on medical evidence provided by an appropriate  
21 qualified medical professional.

22  
23 ~~(d) The requirements of subsection (a) of this section also do not apply if:~~

- 24  
25 ~~(1) determining the availability of comparable services and benefits under any~~  
26 ~~other program would delay the provision of vocational rehabilitation services~~  
27 ~~to any customer whom VRD has determined to be at extreme medical risk,~~  
28 ~~based on medical evidence provided by an appropriate qualified medical~~  
29 ~~professional; or~~  
30  
31 ~~(2) an immediate job placement would be lost because of a delay in the provision of~~  
32 ~~comparable services and benefits.~~

33  
34 **SUBCHAPTER G. CRISS COLE REHABILITATION CENTER**

35  
36 **§856.84. Initial Eligibility.**

- 37  
38 (a) To be eligible for vocational rehabilitation (VR) services at the Criss Cole  
39 Rehabilitation Center (CCRC), an individual must be:  
40  
41 (1) at least 18 years of age;  
42  
43 (2) legally blind or deafblind~~Deafblind~~;  
44  
45 ~~(3) a Texas resident;~~  
46

1           (3)(4) a current VR customer; and

2  
3           (4)(5) referred by a VR counselor for services at CCRC.

4  
5           (b) Any individual described in subsection (a) of this section shall be subject to a  
6 computerized criminal history (CCH) check, and the results of the CCH will be  
7 evaluated as to the individual's eligibility for VR services at CCRC. A risk  
8 evaluation must be completed if the CCH check identifies a criminal history. The  
9 Agency~~TWC~~ will perform a risk evaluation to include the following factors, but not  
10 be limited to the:

11           (1) severity of the offense;

12           (2) time frame of the offense;

13           (3) rehabilitation of the customer; and

14           (4) parole and community supervision terms.

15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20           (c) A customer~~Notwithstanding subsection (a)(3) of this section, a non-Texas resident~~  
21 who is receiving services from an entity in another state and who otherwise meets  
22 the requirements set out in subsections (a) and (b) of this section may be considered  
23 for admission and training on a space-available basis, subject to an agreement  
24 between the out-of-state entity and the Agency on payment of cost of services  
25 provided to the individual.