

Rehabilitation Council of Texas 2023 Annual Report

In partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission

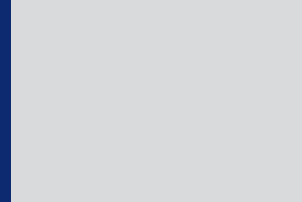
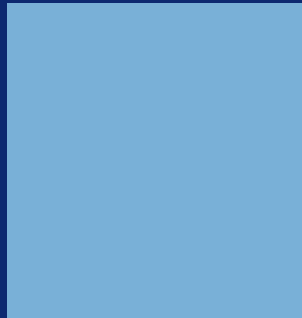
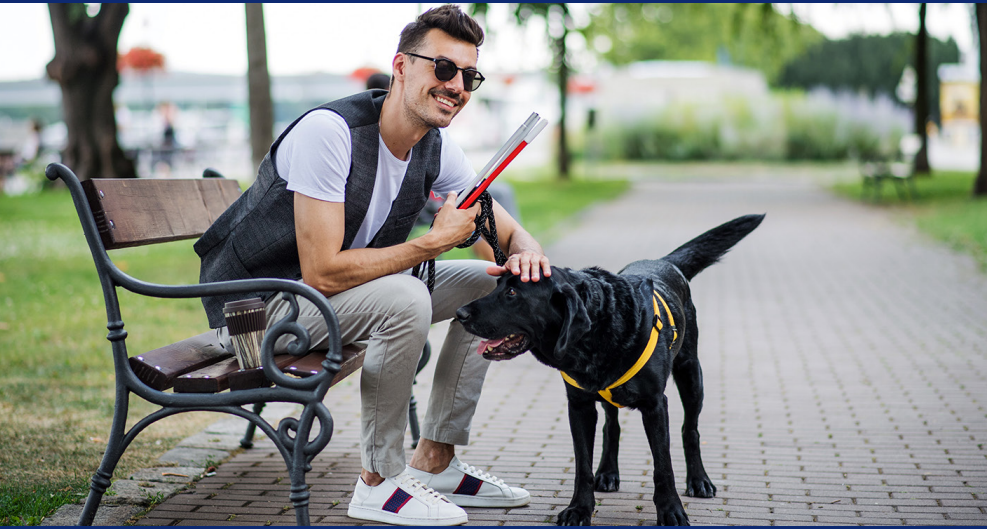
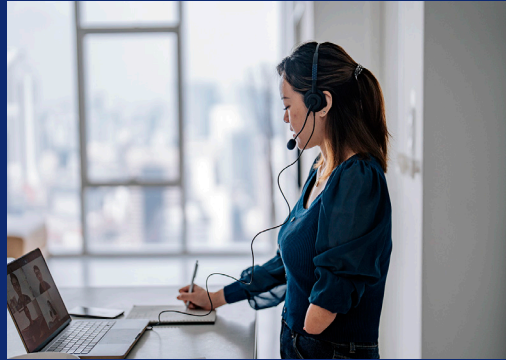
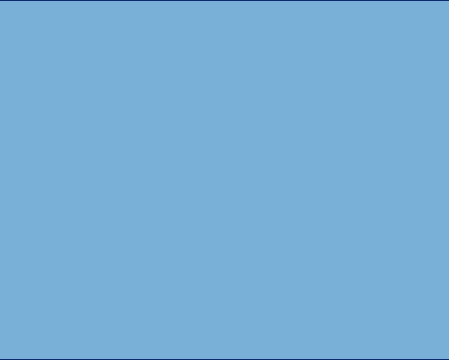
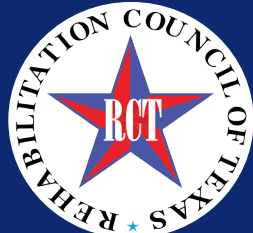


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Messages

Message from Council Chair Gennadiy Goldenshteyn

As fiscal year (FY) 2023 comes to a close, I reflect with fondness on the accomplishments of the Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT) over the past 12 months and look forward to the year ahead. FY 2023 was my first year as the elected chairman of the RCT, and I am very grateful to my fellow Council members for placing their trust in me to lead the Council.



I would like to extend a special thank you to my predecessor, Michael A. Ebbeler Jr., who led the Council with remarkable grace, and the RCT Coordinator, Lisa Godwin, without whom the work of the Council would not nearly be as smooth and productive.

I firmly believe that meaningful employment and career opportunities are a fundamental human right, and, per the Council, it is our mission to help ensure that all Texans with disabilities have access to effective Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services that result in competitive and integrated employment, greater independence, and community participation. We have much to be proud of, as the numerous achievements and success stories contained within can attest.

Furthermore, in 2023, we continued to strengthen our relationship with all stakeholders, including members of the disability community, VR Division team, TWC leadership, VR service providers, advocacy groups, employers, and federal agencies. We have reenergized our outreach with the communities across our vast state to ensure that all regions and communities, regardless of geographic location or disability category, are heard and respected. We have further integrated modern communication technologies into our work to improve accessibility, opportunities for public engagement, and our own operational efficiencies. And, through deeper embracement of customer feedback, data and analytical methods, we have enhanced our ability to provide targeted guidance to continue improving and evolving VR services for all Texans.

We remain grateful for the continued support and partnership of TWC Chairman Bryan Daniel, former Commissioner Aaron Demerson, Commissioner Albert Trevino, Executive Director Edward Serna, and VR Division Director Cheryl Fuller and their teams.

Please enjoy this annual report – there is much to celebrate. And here is to an even brighter 2024!

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'G' followed by a long horizontal line that curves upwards at the end.

Gennadiy Goldenshteyn
RCT Chairman

Message from Vocational Rehabilitation Division Director Cheryl Fuller



As FY 2023 concludes, I'm confident that the implementation of new strategies and activities in many areas of the VR program will continue to yield positive outcomes for individuals with disabilities in our state. As a program that has existed for more than 100 years, I believe the VR program's longevity is in part due to its ability to change and adapt to employer and customer needs, to respond to the dynamic labor force and to use technology to continuously improve our processes.

As Director of the Texas VR program, it is my honor, on behalf of the TWC, to partner with the RCT to ensure that individuals with disabilities have expanded career opportunities and a clear path to meaningful employment in the growing Texas economy. With RCT's ongoing support, TWC's VR program served 96,253 Texans with disabilities in FY 2023.

Enhancements to our internal systems and processes during FY 2023 are aligned with our "Customer FIRST" guiding principle. These enhancements include continued reduction in forms to decrease administrative burden for VR providers, as well as a redesign of our VR Services Manual to streamline critical information about VR services. Additionally, we completed a redesign project for VR's case management system, ReHabWorks, to improve workflow and incorporate a new virtual assistant application called SARA, which offers a secure and convenient method for VR staff and customers to communicate and share information.

A core principle of the VR program is customer informed choice. In FY 2023, VR expanded benefits counseling services to increase the availability of this essential service for VR customers receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Understanding how work may affect their benefits and receiving information about the work incentives available to them supports informed choice by VR customers receiving SSDI and SSI as they consider their employment goals.

We continue to cultivate and expand partnerships with Texas businesses. Through Project SEARCH, an international school-to-work program, TWC's Vocational Rehabilitation Services partners with businesses to support the state's 30 Project SEARCH programs and 185 VR participants across Texas during 2022-2023 school year. The VR Business Team also continues to partner with companies such as Dell Technologies, United Health Group, Advanced Auto, H-E-B, Walgreens, Dow Chemical, Baylor Scott & White and more to create training opportunities for VR customers in work environments that allow for growth and employment opportunities.

I look forward to our partnership in FY 2024, as we continue our work to implement the strategies in the six major goal areas in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan, thereby improving and expanding services for Texans with disabilities.

Cheryl Fuller
VR Division Director

About the Rehabilitation Council of Texas

Mission, Values, and Responsibilities

The Rehabilitation Council of Texas (Council) advises the state's designated Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program on policy, scope, and effectiveness of services. The Council is federally mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA.

The Council helps ensure that Texans with disabilities have access to effective VR services that result in competitive and integrated employment, greater independence, and community participation. Bylaws that are designed to support this goal govern the Council.

The Texas governor appoints Council members for three-year terms to represent a diverse range of individuals with disabilities and community perspectives. They are charged with being the voice of VR service recipients.

The Council participates in National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils to promote a nationally consistent vision for VR priorities, goals, and outcomes.

Learn more by visiting twc.texas.gov/agency/councils-advisory/rehabilitation-council

Mission

The Council's mission is to partner with the state vocational rehabilitation program to advocate for Texans with disabilities in the vocational rehabilitation process.

Values

- The worth and dignity of each individual
- The right to choice, which is realized by access to full information
- Work opportunities, which open doors to individual independence and participation in community life
- Person-centered goals, service plans, and delivery systems leading to individual success
- Shared roles and responsibilities to improve customer satisfaction with the rehabilitation process and outcomes
- Collaboration and partnership with federal, state, and private agencies for system improvement

Responsibilities

- Review, analyze, and advise the state vocational rehabilitation programs on performance, effectiveness, customer satisfaction, responsibilities, functions, and eligibility, including the need for order of selection.
- Submit reports of progress of the vocational rehabilitation program to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) commissioner.
- Help prepare the State Plan for the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and develop a description of the

Council's input and recommendations as a part of the plan.

- Review and analyze the vocational rehabilitation program effectiveness, including an assessment of the customer satisfaction and the vocational rehabilitation needs of Texans with disabilities.
- Submit an annual report that highlights vocational rehabilitation services' goals, achievements, and statistics to the Texas governor and RSA commissioner.
- Coordinate working relationships between the state vocational rehabilitation program, State Independent Living Council (SILC), and Centers for Independent Living in Texas.
- Coordinate activities with other councils to avoid duplication of efforts and increase the number of individuals served.

Committees

The following committees are responsible for upholding the mission, values, and responsibilities of the Council in partnership with representatives from the state vocational rehabilitation programs.

Executive Committee

Committee Chair: Gennadiy Goldenshteyn. Composed of chair, vice chair, and all committee chairs. Coordinates with state vocational rehabilitation programs' leadership; develops quarterly meeting agendas; develops public outreach materials; and reviews the Council's budget, bylaws, and amendments.

Planning and Review Committee

Committee Chair: Gennadiy Goldenshteyn. Helps set and evaluate progress toward goals and priorities for the Combined State Plan for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, recommends ways to improve vocational rehabilitation services, and receives public comment.

Customer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment Committee

Committee Chair: Lisa Cowart. Reviews customer satisfaction survey results and other program data, addresses service concerns, and helps steer a statewide needs assessment every three years.

Membership and Education Committee

Committee Chairs: Lindsey Geeslin and Emily Robinson. Educates Council members about federal and state legislation and how to best represent the interests of Texans with disabilities, recruits new members, and plans and oversees new member orientation activities.

Policy, Procedure, and Personnel Development Committee

Committee Chair: Karen Stanfill. Comments on changes to vocational rehabilitation policy, reviews appeals decisions, and monitors procedural changes, staffing, training, and impartial hearing officer selection.



Our Work in Fiscal Year 2023

Year in Review

Full Council by Chair Gennadiy Goldenshteyn

The Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT) had a very active FY 2023. While our committee chairs describe the notable accomplishments of their respective committees later in this report, I would like to highlight several Council-wide activities and accomplishments below.

Membership

This year we have welcomed, as well as welcomed back, a number of both reappointed and new members:

- Reappointed Member: Karen Stanfill
- New Members:
 - Peggy Schmidt, replacing Bobby Hodges
 - Daniel W. Solcher, replacing Lisa Maciejewski

We thank all the members who have departed the council and welcome the fresh perspectives and commitment of the new members.

On a bittersweet note, our Vice-Chair, Dr. James Williams, has accepted a position as the VR Director for the State of Iowa. As a former VR customer, a provider, and a RCT member, Dr. Williams provided an invaluable point of view. We wish him much luck in Iowa and will miss him dearly in Texas.

Stakeholder Engagement

One of the main foci of the Council in 2023 was to ensure that we continue to proactively represent stakeholders across our vast and diverse state. As such, it is important that Council members are able to get “boots on the ground” perspective in a variety of regions. To drive this, we have held two of our four quarterly meetings in San Antonio (Region 6) and Lubbock (Region 1), where we had the privilege of learning from the regional VR Division leadership, staff, and provider partners. Personally, spending time with the team from the Burkhardt Center at Texas Tech (Lubbock, Region 1) was one of the highlights of the past year. Such firsthand exposures are invaluable to the Council to ensure that our voice includes every Texan, and we will continue holding sessions in the various regions across the state in 2024. Our hybrid meeting approach (please see below) allows us to host meetings in every corner of Texas while providing full accessibility where and when needed.

The council is continuing to strengthen our relationships with employers across the state. We consider employers one of the key stakeholders in the VR ecosystem – after all, the end goal of VR is to ensure meaningful employment and career opportunities, which would not be possible without active participation of statewide employers. In 2023, we have initiated active and systemic participation of Council members in events creating employer awareness and celebrating success stories and accomplishments. Some of the highlights include several events hosted by Aaron Demerson, former TWC Commissioner Representing Employers, and Julian Alvarez III, former TWC Commissioner Representing Labor, such as the inspiring We Hire Ability recognition ceremonies of Lewisville’s Bakery Express and Temple’s McLane Company.



Former Commissioner Aaron Demerson and Council Members Amanda Bowdoin, Daniel Solcher, and Gennadiy Goldenshteyn attended the event at Lewisville's Bakery Express.



RCT Member and McLane Employee Jennifer Clouse, Julian Alvarez III, former TWC Commissioner Representing Labor and Aaron Demerson, former TWC Commissioner Representing Employers attended this event at Temple's McLane Company.

Furthermore, in collaboration with our VR Division partners, we are continuing to build relationships with other TWC divisions. For example, in the past year we have laid out groundwork to understand employer feedback on preparedness of VR Customers, which we are looking to start better understanding in 2024.

We continue to enjoy extremely productive partnerships with Client Assistance Program (CAP) Liaison Karen Stanfill, Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) Liaison Peggy Schmidt, Partners Resource Network (PRN), Liaison Lisa Cowart, State Independent Living Council (SILC), Liaison April Pollreisz, Texas Education Agency (TEA), Liaison Emily Robinson, and Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC), Liaison Lindsey Geeslin.

Strengthening the Relationship with TWC and VR Division

RCT's work is made easier by our great and respectful partnership with TWC and VR Division leadership and staff. In 2023, we were able to build on our collaborative relationship with VR Director Cheryl Fuller and her team to understand and interpret the voices of stakeholders, provide meaningful inputs into the State Plan, and help prioritize VR Division projects and initiatives. Additionally, the TWC Commissioners and Executive Director Edward Serna remain supportive and engaged advocates for the Council.

With support of Executive Director Serna, the Council continues to learn about the extent of the services and benefits that TWC provides to VR customers along with the services provided by the VR Division, and we welcome the ability to influence the holistic efforts that TWC is implementing for current and potential VR Customers.

Lastly, RCT members actively participated in the annual TWC Workforce Conference in Dallas. It was refreshing and encouraging to see numerous VR Division staff attending and presenting in the conference. The recognition of VR services as one of core missions of TWC and seeing cross-division collaboration between TWC divisions will allow for better results and improved experience for VR Customers, staff, and service providers.

State and National Collaboration

RCT members continued to be active on the national stage in 2023. Several members attended the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC), Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), and National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) Fall and Spring conference in San Antonio, TX and Bethesda, MD, respectively. These conferences allowed RCT members to share best practices with our peers in other states and learn directly from the U.S. Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) team about current trends and future expectations.

An example of an implemented best practice that Council members have brought back from one of the national conferences is the amended policy on financial needs test threshold (also known as Basic Living Requirement), allowing for the state to pay for more services for the VR Customers.

Furthermore, several RCT members met with RSA's State Monitoring and Program Improvement Division and provided our frank perspectives as part of the RSA 2023 review of the TWC VR program.

Technology Adoption

The world is evolving, and RCT is evolving with it. In partnership with TWC's VR Division, in 2023 the council has fully embraced the hybrid approach to our public meetings. By combining in-person attendance with the ability to join meetings via Zoom (and supported by the latest in telecommunications technologies), we are able to increase active participation and public engagement while providing maximum accessibility for all stakeholders.

We have also embraced the approach of using and disseminating digital binders (e-information). This allows Council members to have ready access to needed information while decreasing our carbon footprint.

Planning for 2024

Finally, RCT has held our second annual, off-site strategic planning session. Hosted in sunny Corpus Christi, the session allowed Council members to take a broader look at our mission and vision, review our 2023 accomplishments and where we felt we fell short, and develop a robust plan for 2024. We thank Ms. Lucy Gafford of the University of North Texas, who very effectively facilitated the session in collaboration with our Council member Dr. Williams.

As you can see, our 2023 was active, eventful, and productive, and 2024 is shaping up to be even more so.

Membership and Education Committee by Chair Emily Robinson

During FY 2023 the Membership and Education Committee committed to adhere to the actions set forth by the Executive Committee during the strategic planning session in July 2022. The committee held virtual meetings before each quarterly RCT meeting to:

- Discuss updates on any legislation that may potentially affect vocational rehabilitation
- Review membership terms of each RCT member and work to fill council vacancies
- Coordinate new member mentoring program and pair a mentor with a new RCT member
- Coordinate with RCT Chair and schedule speakers for quarterly RCT meetings
- Hold elections for officer positions consistent with RCT bylaws

After working with the actions that were established, the committee reviewed current actions and expanded on those actions from discussions during the strategic planning session in September 2023. This has allowed for clarification and strengthening of the actions outlined for the committee to follow while maintaining the integrity of the RCT. The Membership and Education Committee will develop and coordinate member continuous education program by:

- Reviewing and updating the RCT Mentorship Guide to include profile for mentor/mentee matching
- Developing a pool of applicants for Council positions that meets the composition requirements and includes underrepresented populations

The Membership and Education Committee will also focus its time coordinating with the Executive Committee to identify critical training needs and develop an annual training plan to implement in FY 2025.

Customer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment Committee by Chair Lisa Cowart

The Customer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment (CSNA) Committee continued its work to ensure that Texans have access to the best VR services possible. The CSNA Committee was extra busy in 2023, as it marked the year for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The CSNA takes place every three years and helps shape the future of VR services in Texas. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, these assessments were conducted in person at town hall meetings across the state. In 2020, during the pandemic, the town hall meetings were conducted virtually via Zoom. In 2023, the committee and TWC staff conducted the town hall meetings via a hybrid model of in-person and Zoom meetings. In total, five hybrid town hall meetings were held between April 11, 2023, and May 6, 2023, in the cities of Alice, Stafford, Plano, Tyler, and Lubbock. The CSNA town hall preliminary statistics include:

- 113 attendees including service providers, TWC staff, disability/customer advocacy groups, other government organizations, current/former customers or caregivers, and employers. (This number does not include the Council/TWC-VR panelists)
- The top 5 VR needs mentioned during the CSNA 2023 hybrid sessions were workload and staffing needs, customer choice/provider availability/provider training needs, labor market knowledge/business partnerships, communication/collaboration needs, and job placement/readiness/workplace learning needs.

Quarterly, the committee examines the results of the CSNA surveys conducted by Westat, reviews VR performance updates to identify strengths and improvement opportunities, and then works with TWC staff to implement necessary improvements.

Also in 2023, the committee partnered with VRD staff on the 2023 CSNA survey request for proposal (RFP), addressed service concerns expressed by VR customers, and explored our approach to understanding satisfaction of employers as a crucial customer base.

Policy, Procedures, and Personnel Development Committee by Chair Karen Stanfill

The Policy, Procedure, and Personnel Development committee had a very active year. We focused on goals set in our strategic plan, which included decreasing the number of approvals needed to provide services to customers. As a part of this process, we worked with Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS) to analyze the length of time it took to receive approvals for services such as vehicle modifications, surgeries, and self-employment. We also met with the TWC VR Purchasing Department to discuss the limitations the agency was experiencing from the changes in federal regulations and state rules.

Another goal was to improve employee retention. As a part of this goal, we looked at the ability to provide merit raises for counselor I to a counselor II and provide input on how this process was affecting the morale for staff. The options available for recognizing good work were discussed and suggestions provided. Additionally, we began discussing with the agency ways to market and recruit staff using social media.

We also discussed creating customer guides that explain in laymen terms the vocational rehabilitation program and steps of applying for and receiving VR services. Examples of these types of guides were provided to the committee. We will continue working on this goal next year.

Provider engagement has been an important goal for TWC VR and the Council. Our committee discussed many aspects of this subject throughout the year including feedback from the committee on the Standard for Providers manual, meeting with the TWS-VRS state office to give feedback on the audit process for providers as well as participating in the quarterly provider calls. A focus of this effort was also to improve the invoicing and payment methods for the agency and providers. The feedback received let us know that progress in this area has been made.

We also identified subject matter experts to assist our committee on certain services that may require more in-depth knowledge, such as assistive technology, vehicle modification, and self-employment.

Throughout the year we also reviewed proposed policies and provided input and feedback. Many times, our feedback was accepted and incorporated in policy. This included feedback on approvals and informed choice. The committee requested TWS-VRS to remove their rate of pay for tuition for state colleges and pay the rate that State Colleges charged, reduced by any grants the customer obtained. TWS-VRS agreed with this request and policy was changed.

Finally, the committee and the Council as a whole has asked the TWC VR to increase the rate a family can make before requesting participation in the VR program. We will continue to make this request as we work together moving forward.



Measures of Success

Customer Satisfaction Survey

The following survey results describe satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services provided by the Texas Workforce Commission in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2023. Surveys were completed by customers with an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) whose cases were closed as either successful (employed) or unsuccessful (not employed) the month prior to the survey. Percentages indicate customers who responded “yes” or those who answered “satisfied” or “very satisfied” and do not include data for survey responders who chose not to answer the question.

Customer Satisfaction Survey Result: All Disabilities (including both General and Visual Disabilities)

General disabilities include behavioral and mental health conditions; hearing impairments, including deafness; alcohol or drug addiction; intellectual, learning and developmental disabilities; and physical disabilities, including traumatic brain and spinal cord injury, back injury, paralysis and impaired movement. Visual disabilities include blindness, significant visual impairments, and deaf blindness.

I was treated in a friendly, caring, and respectful manner when I dealt with VR staff	93.3%
TWC VR staff demonstrated a can-do attitude when working with me	89.9%
When contacting my local VR office, someone responded to me no later than the next business day	77.0%
TWC VR staff explained when and why appointments were scheduled with them	90.0%
My counselor and I maintained contact as often as agreed to in my IPE	83.5%
I was satisfied with the explanation of services to help me reach my goal	86.8%
I had input in setting my employment goals	89.2%
I had input in planning the services I received	87.3%
My counselor and I discussed when services would begin and end	84.3%
I was involved in choosing who provided services (such as Job Placement, Supported Employment, Training, Orientation & Mobility, Diabetes Education, or other services) included on my IPE	69.5%
VR staff provided me the guidance I needed	83.8%
My services were not interrupted because my counselor changed, or my counselor was absent	78.2%
My services were not interrupted due to the Covid-19 pandemic	81.3%
I have the ability to receive services remotely	90.1%
The main reason I cannot receive services remotely is no internet, don't know how to participate, don't have the equipment (respectively)	22.4%, 37.9%, 39.7%
My preference for VR service delivery is in person, remotely over the internet or a mixed approach (respectively)	24.7%, 33.3%, 42.1%
I was satisfied with the services I received from service providers that my counselor sent me to	87.6%
I was satisfied with my counselor	87.0%
I was satisfied with my overall experience with VR	86.4%
I am working now	72.1%

I lost my job due the Covid-19 pandemic (percent of those who reported not working)	10.9%
My job loss is: Permanent, Temporary, of Unknown Duration (respectively)	51.2%, 15.4%, 33.3%
I am satisfied with my wages	85.3%
I have employee benefits such as vacation, sick leave, and health insurance	62.9%
I am satisfied with not having employee benefits	49.5%
I am satisfied with the employee benefits I have	92.3%
I am satisfied with my chance for advancement	80.6%
I am satisfied with my job overall	90.6%

Customer Satisfaction Survey Results: Visual Disabilities

Visual disabilities include blindness, significant visual impairments, and deaf blindness.

I was treated in a friendly, caring, and respectful manner when I dealt with VR staff	91.9%
TWC VR staff demonstrated a can-do attitude when working with me	88.8%
When contacting my local VR office, someone responded to me no later than the next business day	74.7%
TWC VR staff explained when and why appointments were scheduled with them	88.4%
My counselor and I maintained contact as often as agreed to in my IPE	81.3%
I was satisfied with the explanation of services to help me reach my goal	85.7%
I had input in setting my employment goals	88.0%
I had input in planning the services I received	87.6%
My counselor and I discussed when services would begin and end	82.7%
I was involved in choosing who provided services (such as Job Placement, Supported Employment, Training, Orientation & Mobility, Diabetes Education, or other services) included on my IPE	68.7%
VR staff provided me the guidance I needed	82.9%
My services were not interrupted because my counselor changed, or my counselor was absent	77.4%
My services were not interrupted due to the Covid-19 pandemic	80.1%
I have the ability to receive services over the internet	81.7%
I am not able to receive services over the internet because I don't have internet, I don't know how to participate remotely, or I don't have the equipment to participate	25.0%, 33.3%, 41.7%
My preference for VR service delivery is in person, remotely, or a mixed approach (respectively)	25.1%, 30.8%, 44.1%
I was satisfied with the services I received from service providers that my counselor sent me to	87.2%
I was satisfied with my counselor	87.9%
I was satisfied with my overall experience with VR	84.9%
I am working now	58.4%
I lost my job due the Covid-19 pandemic (percent of those who reported not working)	6.8%
My job loss is: Permanent, Temporary, of Unknown Duration (respectively)	25.0%, 12.5%, 62.5%
I am satisfied with my wages	83.6%
I have employee benefits such as vacation, sick leave, and health insurance	58.5%
I am satisfied with not having employee benefits	54.4%
I am satisfied with the employee benefits I have	90.6%
I am satisfied with my chance for advancement	79.1%
I am satisfied with my job overall	88.5%

Statistics

Statistics: General Disabilities

The following statistics describe vocational rehabilitation services for persons with general disabilities (other than vision impairment) provided in SFY 2023 by the Texas Workforce Commission. For age-related data, the customer's age reported at the start of the state fiscal year was used. General disabilities include behavioral and mental health conditions; hearing impairments, including deafness; alcohol or drug addiction; intellectual, learning, and developmental disabilities; and neurological and physical disabilities, including traumatic brain and spinal cord injury, back injury, paralysis, and impaired movement.

Total customers served, all ages*: 86,924

Total customers served under age 22:** 36,408

Total Pre-ETS Students Served*:** 33,892

*"Customers Served" = from Initial Contact with Case Assignment forward

**Under the age of 22 as of 9/1/2022

***Students who are eligible or potentially eligible to receive Pre-employment Transition Services. This count also includes potentially eligible students in Initial Contact prior to Case Assignment.



Percent Served by Gender

All Ages: 45.4% Female; 54.2% Male; 0.4% didn't identify **Under Age 22:** 39.4% Female; 60.1% Male; 0.5% didn't identify

Race/Ethnicity of General Disabilities Served

Race/Ethnicity	Total General VR Customer Responses	Percent General VR Customers Served
Non Hispanic Pacific Islander	293	0.3%
Non Hispanic American Indian/Alaskan	639	0.7%
Non Hispanic Asian	2,004	2.3%
Not Reported/Unavailable	2,023	2.3%
Non Hispanic African American	21,101	24.3%
Hispanic	27,451	31.6%
Non Hispanic White	33,413	38.4%
Total*	86,924	100.0%

SSI/SSDI Information

SSI/SSDI Information	Total General VR Customers Served	Percent General VR Customers Served	Total General VR Successful Closures	Percent General VR Successful Closures
SSI/SSDI at Application	10,894	12.5%	929	9.5%
SSI/SSDI During Case (at app, current or close)	14,774	17.0%	1,346	13.7%
SSI/SSDI at Closure	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	1,248	12.7%

Percent Expenditure by Service Type

Expenditures by Service Category	All Ages	Under 22
Computers and Related Equipment	0.9%	0.8%
All Other Goods & Services	1.5%	0.5%
Maintenance and Transportation	1.7%	1.2%
Prosthetics and Orthotics	3.1%	0.1%
Job Placement Services	4.7%	4.0%
Assistive Technology, including evaluation	5.7%	0.8%
Medical Services	6.1%	0.6%
Supported Employment Services	6.8%	7.5%
Room and Board (Academic/Vocational Training)	7.4%	15.8%
Pre-Employment Transition Services	10.2%	28.4%
Diagnostic and Evaluation	12.0%	5.0%
Hearing Aids and Interpretive Services	16.0%	2.4%
Academic and Vocational Training	23.9%	33.0%
Total	100%	100%

* Amounts do not include expenditures that are not associated with a specific case. Age is based on age at start of the SFY.

This table contains General case expenditures (service authorization payments) included in ReHabWorks that are associated with a specific case and is not inclusive of other client services expenditures routed through the purchase order processes (such as Pre-ETS Statewide Initiatives) in the agency's accounting system. The TWC Finance Division reports Combined VR expenditures, which includes both General and Blind cases. Total Combined case service expenditures across all service categories and populations is \$196,592,471 (per TWC Finance).

Medical Services includes Surgery and Hospitalization and Restoration Services. All Other Goods and Services includes:

Diabetes Education, Benefits Counseling, Miscellaneous, Other Services for Family Members, Child Care, State License Fees, Uniform Items for Employment, Employment Goods and Equipment - Non-Consumable, Self-Employment Goods and Equipment - Non Consumable, Other Rehab Tech Services, Other Personal Attendant Services, Translator for Limited English Proficiency, Self-Employment Services, and Halfway House Services - CRP.

Disabilities Served

Primary Disability	% of Customers, All Ages	% of Customers, Under Age 22
Other Impairments	0.23%	0.24%
Substance Abuse	1.00%	0.06%
Traumatic Brain Injury/Spinal Cord Injury	2.19%	0.79%
Cardiac/Respiratory/Circulatory	2.83%	0.60%
Other Physical Debilitation or Impairments	5.49%	1.39%
Mental /Emotional/Psychosocial	17.30%	10.99%
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	17.66%	5.80%
Neurological/Musculoskeletal/Orthopedic	18.51%	7.42%
Neurodevelopmental Disorders	34.78%	72.72%
Total	100%	100%

* Disability type is unavailable for most customers prior to the eligibility determination phase.

Successful Closures

Total successful closures, All Ages: 9,813

Total successful closures under age 22: 1,176

Percent Successful Closures Served by Gender

All Ages: 46.6% Female; 53.3% Male; 0.1% Did not self-identify

Under Age 22: 33.1% Female; 66.7% Male; 0.3% Did not self-identify

Percent of Successful Closures by Occupation

Successful Closures by Occupation	Successful General VR Closures, All Ages	% of General VR Successful Closures, All Ages	Successful General VR Closures, Under Age 22	% of General VR Successful Closures, Under Age 22
All Other Occupations	31	0.3%	<5	*
Construction and Extraction	254	2.6%	20	1.7%
Computer, Engineering, and Science	325	3.3%	10	0.9%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	365	3.7%	38	3.2%
Production Occupations	392	4.0%	55	4.7%
Sales and Related Occupations	569	5.8%	85	7.2%
Management, Business, and Financial	775	7.9%	5	0.4%
Healthcare Practitioners, Technical, and Healthcare Support	857	8.7%	56	4.8%
Education, Legal, Community Service, Arts, and Media	1,150	11.7%	27	2.3%
Transportation & Material Moving	1,572	16.0%	289	24.6%
Office and Administrative Support	1,619	16.5%	186	15.9%
Service Occupations	1,904	19.4%	402	34.3%

* Counts less than 5 are masked.

This table contains customers who have achieved an employment outcome as described in their Individualized Plan for Employment, maintained employment for 90 days after substantial services are completed, and are employed at closure. 'All Other Occupations' includes Farming, Fishing, Forestry and Military Specific Occupations.

Statistics: Visual Disabilities

The following statistics describe vocational rehabilitation services for persons with visual disabilities provided in state fiscal year 2023. For age-related data, age reported at the start of the fiscal year was used. Visual disabilities include blindness, significant visual impairments, and deaf blindness.

Total Customers Served, All Ages*: 9,329

Total Customers Served, Under Age 22**: 1,782

Total Pre-ETS Students Served***: 1,838

*"Customers Served" = from Initial Contact with Case Assignment forward

**Under the age of 22 as of 9/1/2022

*** Students who are eligible or potentially eligible to receive Pre-employment Transition Services. This count also includes potentially eligible students in Initial Contact prior to Case Assignment.

Percent Served by Gender

All Ages: 49.3% Female; 50.5% Male; 0.2% Did not self-identify

Under Age 22: 46.7% Female; 52.9% Male; 0.4% Did not self-identify

Race/Ethnicity of Blind VR Customers Served

Race/Ethnicity	Total Blind VR Customer Responses	Percent Blind VR Customers Served
Non Hispanic Pacific Islander	28	0.3%
Non Hispanic American Indian/Alaskan	58	0.6%
Non Hispanic Asian	247	2.6%
Not Reported/Unavailable	280	3.0%
Non Hispanic African American	2,173	23.3%
Non Hispanic White	3,006	32.2%
Hispanic	3,537	37.9%
Total*	9,329	100%

SSI/SSDI Information Blind

SSI/SSDI Information	Total Blind VR Customers Served	Percent Blind VR Customers Served	Total Blind VR Successful Closures	Percent Blind VR Successful Closures
SSI/SSDI at Application	1,923	20.6%	101	12.9%
SSI/SSDI During Case (at app, current or at close)	2,438	26.1%	150	19.1%
SSI/SSDI at Closure	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	138	17.6%

Percent Expenditure by Service Type

Expenditures by Service Category	All Ages	Under 22
Job Placement Services	0.9%	0.5%
Supported Employment Services	1.2%	1.2%
All Other Goods and Services	1.8%	1.0%
Orientation and Mobility Training	2.8%	0.6%
Computers and Related Equipment	2.9%	2.2%
Maintenance and Transportation	4.2%	2.0%
Eyeglasses, Lenses, Low Vision Devices, Orthotics/Prosthetics	4.8%	4.5%
Room and Board (Academic/Vocational Training)	7.1%	13.9%
Diagnostic and Evaluation	10.4%	2.3%
Pre-Employment Transition Services	12.2%	39.8%
Academic and Vocational Training	13.2%	19.9%
Medical Services	14.5%	0.0%
Assistive Technology, including evaluation and training	24.1%	12.5%
Total	100%	100%

* Amounts do not include expenditures that are not associated with a specific case. Age is based on age at start of the SFY.

This table contains BVI case expenditures (service authorization payments) included in ReHabWorks that are associated with a specific case and is not inclusive of other client services expenditures routed through the purchase order processes (such as Pre-ETS Statewide Initiatives) in the agency’s accounting system. The TWC Finance Division reports Combined VR expenditures, which includes both General and Blind cases. Total Combined case service expenditures across all service categories and populations is \$196,592,471 (per TWC Finance).

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Successful Closures

Total Successful Closures: 785

Total Successful Closures, Under Age 22: 39

Percent Successful Closures by Gender

All Ages: 48.4% Female; 51.6% Male; 0.0% did not self-Identify

Under Age 22: 38.5% Female; 61.5% Male; 0.0% did not self-identify

Percent of Successful Closures by Occupation

Successful Closures by Occupation	Successful Blind VR Closures, All Ages	% of Blind VR Successful Closures, All Ages	Successful Blind VR Closures, Under Age 22	% of Blind VR Successful Closures, Under Age 22
All Other Occupations	10	1.3%	<5	*
Computer, Engineering, and Science	21	2.7%	<5	*
Construction and Extraction	26	3.3%	<5	*
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	30	3.8%	<5	*
Production Occupations	30	3.8%	<5	*
Sales and Related Occupations	51	6.5%	<5	*
Transportation & Material Moving	81	10.3%	6	15.4%
Management, Business, and Financial	83	10.6%	<5	*

Healthcare Practitioners, Technical & Healthcare Support	102	13.0%	<5	*
Education, Legal, Community Service, Arts and Media	106	13.5%	5	12.8%
Office and Administrative Support	112	14.3%	<5	*
Service Occupations	133	16.9%	12	30.8%

* Counts less than 5 are masked.

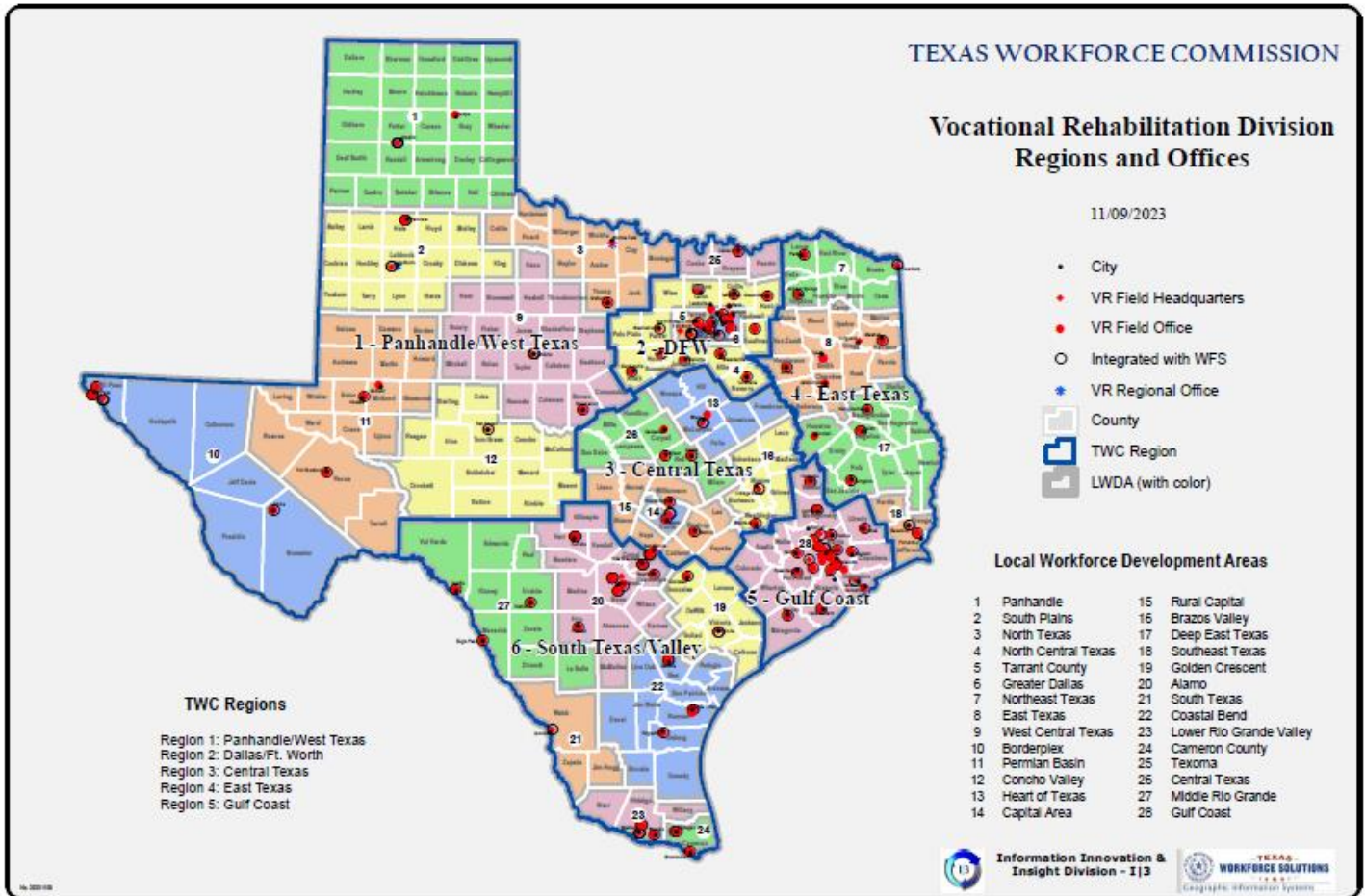
This table contains customers who have achieved an employment outcome as described in their Individualized Plan Employment, maintained employment for 90 days after substantial services are completed, and are employed at closure. All Other Occupations includes Farming, Fishing, Forestry and Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facility Operators.

TWC FY 2023 VR Budget \$299,218,940

FY 2023 VR Client Services Budget \$169,676,713



TWC VR Division Regions and Offices Map



To locate your TWC VR office:

Call: (512) 936-6400

Email: vr.office.locator@twc.state.tx.us

Visit online: www.twc.texas.gov/VRNearMe

Success Stories

Natalie Szot of Waco



“

Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services' assistance was more than just giving me independence, it was an example of striving for equality and accessibility.”

-NATALIE

Natalie, who has muscular dystrophy and uses a wheelchair, reached out to Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services seeking vehicle modifications to enable her daily commute to work.

Natalie is an Accommodations Specialist at Baylor University and requires a modified vehicle to be able to drive to work. Through Vocational Rehabilitation Services, she received assistance with the extra costs to modify her vehicle and special training on how to drive the vehicle.

“I had been waiting since high school to drive, so I could not fully understand the freedom driving would give me. It is a new independence.” she says.

“On my first day of driving to work, I was able to stay a couple of minutes late to finish my work for the day and not have to worry about my ride waiting for me. I am grateful for my vocational

rehabilitation counselor and assistive technology specialist who worked with me through the entire process and advocated for me. Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services' assistance is more than just giving me independence, it is an example of striving for equality and accessibility.”

Elite Collision of Tyler

Jason Toney, owner of Elite Collision Center of Tyler has built his business's reputation on doing quality work, while caring for his customers with honesty and integrity.

Jason believes it's important to lead by example every day by demonstrating in himself the qualities he wants to see in his employees.

Elite Collision Center of Tyler partners with Project SEARCH, an international school-to-work program, to employ students with disabilities at its worksite to develop their marketable, transferable skills and expand their future career opportunities.



Gilberto Alvarado worked with Jason at Elite Collision as a Project SEARCH intern and was then hired at the company full time.

Gilberto describes the experience working at Elite Collision with confidence, "I sand the cars, the hoods, the bumpers, the roofs, the fenders, the doors. I help the folks that work here. They treat me like family. They took me to a car show. I'm more confident with the people. I'm not shy with them anymore," he said.

Jason says being involved with Project SEARCH and being a disability inclusive employer has transformed his work culture in positive ways. "Gilberto brings accountability to the table because you know if I'm teaching him how to do something, he has to be able to see me doing it. So, I it makes me have to focus on me and it makes me better," he says.

Jason continues, "I think what's so neat to me about Project Search though is the impact it makes on our associates. Our associates get so much out of working with and being with the students of TISD every day and I can't tell you how many stories I've heard from them about the impact that TISD, their students and project search is made on their life."



John Russo, History Teacher, Northeast Texas Community College



Sixteen years ago, John Russo relocated to Texas with a unique challenge — he was completely blind. Prior to his move, he benefited from vocational rehabilitation services while residing in California. His aspiration was to become a history professor, and to achieve this, he sought assistance from VR.

Upon his initial meeting with Stacey Townsend, John expressed his desire to return to college to complete his degree. Starting from scratch, he lacked basic computer skills and needed assistive technology. The VR Employment Assistance Specialist conducted an evaluation, leading to a trip to Austin for hands-on experience with the most suitable assistive technology. It was determined that speech software for his computer and a Braille note taker for college courses would be beneficial. A referral to Region 4 for assistive technology training followed.

VR teachers provided in-home training on basic computer skills, speech software, and the use of the Braille note taker. Proficient in Braille, John successfully completed the training and resumed his

college education. Over the next few years, he earned his master's degree in history from Texas A&M University in Texarkana.

Post-graduation, John achieved his goal of becoming a history instructor at Northeast Texas Community College in Mt. Pleasant. Over the years, Region 4's VR staff maintained contact with John, and in March 2021, he reapplied for services. Due to the shift to online meetings caused by COVID-19, John required upgraded assistive technology and equipment to continue his employment. The employment assistance specialist facilitated the acquisition of a new laptop, JAWS (Speech Software), and a new Braille note taker.

VR teacher Whitney Goodson and the Orientation and Mobility Specialist provided minimal services this time, considering John's past experience. Having obtained a guide dog, Maxwell, several years ago, John navigated the process of receiving a new dog after the retirement of his previous companion.



Today, John, accompanied by Maxwell, a standard poodle guide dog, travels independently to and from work and around the campus. Students marvel as he effortlessly delivers two-hour lectures without any notes, his hands adeptly navigating his Braille note taker. Maxwell, a patient companion, leads John between his office and classroom, contributing to John's popularity among NTCC students.

Expressing gratitude, John acknowledges VR for playing a pivotal role in helping him achieve his goal. He attests, "I wouldn't be where I am today without VR."



Professor John Russo and his guide dog, Maxwell, showcase confidence, unlimited possibilities while living with blindness.

Membership and Meetings



Gennadiy Goldenshteyn
RCT Chairman
Business, Industry and
Labor Representative
Dallas, TX



James E. Williams, EdD
RCT Vice Chairman
Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Recipient Representative
Leander, TX



Mark Baird
State VR Counselor
Representative
San Angelo, TX



Glenda J. Born
Disability Representative
Austin, TX



Amanda Bowdoin
Disability
Representative
Forney, TX



Jennifer Clouse
Business, Industry and
Labor Representative
Temple, TX



Lisa Cowart
Parent Training & Information
Representative
Sour Lake, TX



Michele L. Dobbins
State VR Counselor
Representative
LaPorte, TX



Cheryl Fuller
State VR Director
Representative
Austin, TX



Lindsey R. Geeslin
Texas Workforce Investment
Council Representative
Lorena, TX



April Pollreis
Statewide Independent Living
Council Representative
Amarillo, TX



Joe Powell
Disability Representative
Irving, TX



Emily Robinson
State Educational Agency
Representative
Pflugerville, TX



Rodrick Robinson
Business, Industry and
Labor Representative
McKinney, TX



Daniel W. Solcher
Business, Industry, and Labor
Representative
Allen, TX



Peggy Schmidt
Community Rehabilitation
Program Representative
Lucas, TX



Karen Stanfill
Client Assistance Program
Representative
Houston, TX



Lisa Godwin
RCT Coordinator
Surfside Beach, TX

Become a Member

If you are an individual with a disability or someone interested in providing input on VR services for Texans with disabilities, the RCT may be for you. Interested individuals must submit an application to the Texas Governor. Council members are appointed by the Governor for three-year terms and represent a diverse range of disabilities and community perspectives. RCT must include representatives from the state's designated VR program, the State Independent Living Council, community rehabilitation programs, other disability organizations and programs, and individuals with disabilities and their family members or authorized representatives. Business, industry, and labor representatives, and those from the State Workforce Investment Board and Texas Education Agency, are also required.

Learn more by visiting the RCT website. www.twc.texas.gov/agency/councils-advisory/rehabilitation-council

2024 Rehabilitation Council of Texas Quarterly Meeting Schedule

Council members convene for quarterly meetings to participate in discussion panels, presentations, and committee meetings in support of the RCT's mission, values, and responsibilities.

Times and locations to be determined. For current meeting information and materials, visit the webpage at: Rehabilitation Council of Texas - Texas Workforce Commission
www.twc.texas.gov/agency/councils-advisory/rehabilitation-council

2024 Quarterly Meeting Schedule

November 27, 2023

February 1-2, 2024

May 2-3, 2024

August 1-2, 2024



101 East 15th Street
Austin, Texas 78778-0001
512-463-2222
twc.texas.gov

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Relay Texas: 800-735-2989 (TTY) and 711 (Voice).