# VR Standards for Providers Chapter 14: Work Experience

Revised April 1, 2021

## 14.3 Work Experience Placement

### 14.3.1 Service Description

The Work Experience specialist assists the customer in the process of locating and setting up a Work Experience site that meets the criteria documented on the [VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html). This training and assistance can be provided remotely when the VR counselor has indicated approval of remote service delivery on the [VR1600, Work Experience Referral](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html). For more information refer to [VR-SFP 3.6.4.1 Remote Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03#s3-6-4).

Work Experience Placements are classified into three levels based on the O\*NET (Occupational Information Network) My Next Move Job Zones at <https://www.onetonline.org/find/zone>. The following is an overview of each level.

#### Entry Level

* Includes O\*NET's My Next Move Job Zones one and two
* Used for the following reasons:
	+ To determine if the customer is ready for competitive, integrated employment
	+ To explore possible career options for the customer; and/or
	+ To develop skills to increase the customer's employability
* Customers typically have the following knowledge, experience, responsibilities, and level of supervision needs:
	+ Little or no previous work-related skill, knowledge, or experience
	+ Some transferable skills or basic knowledge from experience
	+ Knowledge of the tasks, duties, and responsibilities related to the position
	+ Follows standard procedures and written instructions to accomplish assigned tasks
	+ Work is routine and tasks are standardized and/or
	+ Works under direct supervision
* Customers typically have a high school diploma or GED certificate
* Examples of positions can be found at [Job Zone One](https://www.onetonline.org/find/zone?z=1&g=Go) and [Job Zone Two](https://www.onetonline.org/find/zone?z=2&g=Go)
* Gross income earned by the customer will be $10.80 per hour

#### Intermediate Level

* Includes O\*NET's My Next Move Job Zone three
* Used for the following reasons:
	+ To demonstrate skills and gain experience related to vocational training or an associate degree
	+ To evaluate if a customer still has capacity to continue to work in a field due to acquired vocational barrier(s).
* Customers typically have the following knowledge, experience, responsibilities, and level of supervision needs:
	+ Previous work-related skill, knowledge, or experience (for example, completion of training program)
	+ Demonstrates and applies the fundamental concepts, practices, and procedures of a particular field of specialization
	+ Performs varied work that may be somewhat difficult; and/or
	+ With minimum supervision, performs work that is somewhat difficult and requires limited responsibility
* Customers typically have completed an apprenticeship, have one or two years of vocational training (for example, a certificate program or on-the-job training), or have an associate degree
* Examples of positions can be found at [Job Zone Three](https://www.onetonline.org/find/zone?z=3&g=Go)
* Gross income earned by the customer will be $13.92 per hour

#### Advanced Level

* Includes O\*NET's My Next Move Job Zone four
* Used for the following reasons:
	+ To demonstrate skills and gain experience related to a degree; and/or
	+ To evaluate if a customer with vocational barriers still has the capacity to continue to work in a particular field
* Customers typically have the following knowledge, experience, responsibilities, and level of supervision needs:
	+ Works with general supervision
	+ Possesses and applies a broad knowledge of principles, practices, and procedures of a particular field of specialization to the completion of difficult assignments
	+ Work responsibilities may be broad in nature; and/or
	+ Competent in skills and may assist or teach others
* Customers typically have completed a four-year bachelor or higher degree
* Examples of positions can be found at [Job Zone Four](https://www.onetonline.org/find/zone?z=4&g=Go); and
* Gross income earned by the customer will be $20.32 per hour

A planning meeting is held with the VR counselor, customer, Work Experience specialist, and any circle of supports to complete the VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report. This meeting may be conducted remotely; for more information, refer to [VR-SFP 3.6.4.1 Remote Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03#s3-6-4).

Work Experience Placement must meet the following criteria outlined on the [VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html):

* One six-digit Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code listed in the work experience goals section of the form
* 100 percent of the nonnegotiable work experience conditions
* 50 percent or more of the negotiable work experience conditions

A customer's Work Experience Placement must be at a site where the environment is considered integrated, unless otherwise indicated on the VR1601, to meet the customer's individual needs. When the customer is paid a wage, it must be competitive. For the federal definition of competitive wages, see [Competitive Integrated Employment](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-01#cie).

While securing and setting up a Work Experience Placement for the customer, the Work Experience specialist, as applicable, may perform and/or assist the customer with:

* researching and identifying potential Work Experience sites;
* completing any tasks necessary to secure the Work Experience site such as:
	+ attending classes or meetings;
	+ completing applications;
	+ obtaining references;
	+ interviewing;
	+ obtaining criminal background checks;
	+ obtaining health checks;
	+ completing testing (personality, drug, and skills);
	+ identifying accommodation needs;
	+ assisting the customer with disability disclosure when applicable; and
* the steps necessary to follow up on potential Work Experience site or opportunities.

Once a Work Experience site has been secured, the Work Experience specialist assists the customer with the arrangement of transportation to get to and from the work site.

During the first five shifts or days, for no more than five total hours, the Work Experience specialist accompanies the customer to the work site and may perform and/or assist:

* the customer with:
	+ advocating for the customer to receive the opportunity to gain skills, support, and mentoring, when necessary, to foster a positive outcome at the Work Experience site;
	+ orientation to workplace roles and responsibilities;
	+ understanding expectations related to job performance, behavior, and social interactions at the Work Experience site;
	+ disability disclosure, setting up accommodations or support needs, including Work Experience training at the Work Experience site; and
	+ understanding the purpose of the Work Experience trainer, when applicable, including trainer roles and responsibilities; and
* the employer by:
	+ educating the Work Experience site and employees in disability-related issues, such as disability awareness, disability etiquette, the Americans with Disabilities Act, disability accommodations; and
	+ educating the Work Experience site on the roles of the Work Experience trainer, when applicable.

When a Work Experience trainer is going to work with a customer, the Work Experience specialist works with the VR counselor, the customer, and the Work Experience site to identify goals to be addressed in the Work Experience training. When necessary, the Work Experience specialist and Work Experience trainer can work simultaneously with a customer for up to five hours.

When a referral form indicates services cannot be provided remotely, but the Work Experience site will not allow a Work Experience specialist on site (e.g. security clearance or safety concerns) or the Work Experience specialist determines it is not safe to enter the work site, a VR3472 must be approved by the VR director prior to service delivery.

The VR3472 must include:

* how the service will be delivered; and
* how the service delivery will meet the customers individual training needs.

For more information, refer to [VR-SFP 3.6.4.1 Remote Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03#s3-6-4) for requirements and [3.6.4.2 Evaluation of Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03#s3-6-4).

The Work Experience Placement is achieved after the customer completes five days or shifts at the Work Experience site.

Multiple Work Experience Placements for the same customer are allowed if they are necessary to meet the customer's goals. Each Work Experience Placement must aid in the development of soft and hard skills that the customer has not yet mastered and that will assist the customer with career exploration and development of work-readiness skills. A customer should not be placed in the same type of position more than once at the same Work Experience site. If a provider assists with multiple Work Experience Placements, a service authorization is issued for each Work Experience Placement after the VR1601 is completed.

A Work Experience Placement can be an internship, paid, or volunteer position. When a customer obtains a Work Experience Placement, it is the responsibility of the Work Experience site to determine, based on labor laws, whether the placement will be:

* volunteer;
* compensated or uncompensated internship; or
* short-term, temporary work paid by the Work Experiencer site or sponsored by TWS-VR.

The Work Experience specialist who is assisting the customer in gaining a Work Experience Placement should refer the Work Experience site to the following links if they have questions regarding how to classify the customer's work experience:

For information on volunteering and federal labor law—[Volunteering and Federal Labor Law](https://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/whd/flsa/docs/volunteers.asp).

For information on internship and the Federal Labor Act—[Internship and the Federal Labor Act](http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs71.pdf).

With volunteer positions, it is important the customer understands they will not be paid for their time.

With internships, it is important the customer understands what, if any, compensation they will receive by completing the internship.

With Paid Work Experience positions, it is important the customer understand that they will be paid by either:

* the Work Experience site; or
* TWS-VR, when approved by the VR counselor on the [VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html).

TWS-VR can sponsor paid wages for a customer participating in a Paid Work Experience, but a provider cannot offer this option when negotiating a placement without prior written approval on the VR1601, Work Experience Plan and Placement Report.

When TWS-VR sponsors payment of a customer's wages and associated costs, including workers' compensation during the participation in a Work Experience Placement, the [VR3142, Worksite Agreement for Wage Service provided - WorkQuest](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) must be signed by the Work Experience site. The VR3142 indicates that the Work Experience site has agreed that TWS-VR can pay the customer for work performed at the business and that the Work Experience site will report the hours the customer works.  The Work Experience specialist or VR staff may gather the signed VR3142 from the Work Experience site.

VR cannot pay for a Work Experience Placement that is longer than 12 weeks unless there is a vocational need and it is approved by the VR counselor's supervisor. When a supervisor approves increasing the length of a Work Experience, a VR3472 is not required.

Any request to change the Work Experience Placement service description, process and procedure, or the outcomes required for payment must be documented and approved by the VR director using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) form, before the change is implemented.

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## 14.4 Work Experience Training

### 14.4.1 Service Description

Work Experience training services are provided by a Work Experience trainer when a customer needs:

* monitoring to ensure the customer is meeting expectations of the Work Experience site and has the supports and accommodations necessary to be successful; and/or
* more training and support than what is occurring at the Work Experience site.

Training provided by the Work Experience trainer can include:

* teaching skills;
* reinforcing skills;
* establishing and setting up accommodations and/or compensatory techniques to increase the customer's independence and ability to meet the Work Experience site's expectations; and
* monitoring to ensure the customer's and the employer's needs are being met.

When a Work Experience site will not allow a Work Experience trainer on site (e.g. security clearance or safety concerns) or the Work Experience specialist determines it is not safe to enter the work site, Work Experience training may be provided remotely only with a VR director approved VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request.

The VR3472 must include:

* how the service will be delivered; and
* how the service delivery will meet the customers individual training needs.

For more information, refer to [VR-SFP 3.6.4.1 Remote Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03#s3-6-4) for requirements and [3.6.4.2 Evaluation of Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03#s3-6-4).

Work Experience training occurs after Work Experience Placement services are secured. Work Experience training can be authorized when the customer has a Work Experience site:

* on his or her own;
* with the assistance of a teacher, friend, or family member;
* with the assistance of a Employment Services Provider through Work Experience Placement;
* through the Summer Earn and Learn program; or
* through other programs arranged by VR staff.

When necessary, the Work Experience trainer and the Work Experience specialist can simultaneously work with a customer for up to five hours.

VR cannot pay for a Work Experience training longer than 12 weeks for each Work Experience Placement unless there is a vocational need and the additional training time is approved by a VR Supervisor. Any request to change the Work Experience Training service description, process and procedure, or the outcomes required for payment must be documented and approved by the VR director, using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) form, before the change is implemented.

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