

VR Guide to Trial Work Experience Services for Providers

Trial Work Experiences –

Trial Work Experience Services are used by Vocational Rehabilitation when the VRC has significant concerns about the individual's ability to benefit from VR services in terms of an employment outcome. In order for an individual to be determined unable to benefit from VR services in terms of employment, VR must have clear and convincing evidence that the individual is unable to achieve competitive integrated employment. Trial Work Experience services may be used to assess if there is clear and convincing evidence that an individual cannot work.

Trial Work Experience Services can be conducted:

- Before eligibility is determined
- Shortly after eligibility has been determined because new information has come to light, and before other extensive VR services have been provided,
- Note: If the Participant has received extensive services from VR, it is not necessary to provide trial work experience.

Provision of Trial Work Experience Services

- **Referral** – After the VRC assigned to the case develops a Trial Work Plan with the participant, a referral for Trial Work Experiences will be sent to the chosen provider.
 - VR will send a thoroughly completed referral and a copy of the TWE Plan.
 - The referral will clearly indicate the expectations and provide ideas for conducting the TWEs, including:
 - The number of hours per day and per week and the length of time the TWE should last.
 - Ideas for type of work and setting for the TWE.
 - Indicate expectations of phone calls and meetings before and after the TWE.
- **Authorization for the TWE** – The VRC determines the number of hours necessary, based on the needs of the participant, but the general guidelines are:
 - 6-8 hours for introductions, site development and documentation.
 - 10 to 20 hours per week for 1 – 3 weeks, for actual TWE.
 - Facility transportation as required.
 - If a subsequent TWE is determined to be necessary by the VRC, 2 hours can be authorized for TWE site development and documentation.
- **Claims for TWE Services** -When a TWE continues into the next month claims can be submitted accordingly:

- The miscellaneous section of the *Monthly Progress Summary (MPS)* should be used to document time and progress on the TWE and submitted with the claim for hours spent at the end of the month if the TWE is not yet complete.
- The *Trial Work Experience Report* should be submitted to the VRC as soon as possible. The final claim for the TWE will not be approved until the *Trial Work Experience Report* has been submitted.
- **Conducting Trial Work Experiences**
 - TWE site development will be based on the referral information, further communication with the VRC, and working with the participant.
 - The provider is expected to be present at the work site for the entire TWE.
 - The ES should provide necessary support and job coaching to give the participant the opportunity to try out and learn the job tasks.
 - The ES may need to provide a lot of job coaching and support at the beginning of the TWE, gradually reducing support, to determine if the individual has the *potential* to do the job tasks more independently.
 - The ES may need to try different strategies, including visual aids, timers or modifying the job tasks to assess the potential of the individual.
 - Participants can be paid or unpaid during Trial Work Experiences.
 - Although not required, some Employment Service Providers pay individuals minimum wage while they are on the job site, which eliminates host employers' concerns about liability.
 - The ES will arrange a meeting with the VRC and team to discuss the outcome of the first TWE.
 - The ES will complete the *Trial Work Experience Report* (found on VR-CPS) and send a copy of the completed report to the VRC in advance of the meeting to enable the VRC to prepare for the meeting.
 - The VRC will use the report and the discussion in the post TWE meeting to determine the next steps.
 - If the VRC determines from the first TWE, that the participant is unable to benefit from services, but the participant requests another opportunity, the VRC may agree to conduct a second TWE before concluding there is clear and convincing evidence that the participant cannot benefit from VR services, in terms of achieving CIE.
 - When completing the Trial Work Experience Report, if a second Trial Work Experience Report is necessary, the evaluator will indicate if they have concluded that, due to the severity of the disability, they would be unable to

meet the needs of the participant to pursue competitive integrated employment.

Trial Work Experience Report

- The TWE Report identifies the key areas that must be evaluated to assess the ability to work in Competitive Integrated Employment.
- Factual and objective information must be included to support any general statements. For example:
 - Describe any strategies, tactics, visual aids, timers, task modifications that were provided and information about progress.
 - If the participant did not stay on task, describe what they did instead.
 - If the participant had outbursts or challenging behaviors, describe how many and how long they lasted and what was done to de-escalate.
 - If they were late to work multiple times note how many minutes late. Describe what was done to try to improve things.
 - If they were unable to meet employer expectations to complete job tasks, describe what they were able to do compared to the employer expectations or typical expectations.
- Although providers should take thorough notes during the TWE, the TWE Report should go beyond simply repeating those notes and instead synthesize the information into meaningful observations supported by clear details and trends.

Other Considerations:

- It is the VRC's responsibility to determine that Trial Work Experience Services are necessary. These services are only provided when the VRC has significant concerns about the individual's ability to achieve any competitive integrated employment.
- It is the Employment Service provider's responsibility to arrange for, support and observe the participant that is receiving the Trial Work Experience, and to report the observations to the VRC.
- The tone of Trial Work Experience Services should be as positive as possible. While it is true that VR has referred the individual for Trial Work Experience Services because there is a significant question about the participant's ability to benefit from VR services in terms of employment, it is important that the TWE services are presented and treated as an opportunity for the participant to try out working, in a supported and real work setting.
- It is the VRC's responsibility to determine if there is clear and convincing evidence that the participant cannot benefit from services based on information they have about the individual and the outcome of the TWE.

- Although it is important to consider the likes, dislikes, skills and abilities when arranging for a Trial Work Experience in order to provide the participant the best chance of demonstrating potential for CIE, TWEs are not used to determine if an individual can do a specific job. In many cases, it may be difficult to find a TWE that seems like a “good fit”.
- Communication with the VRC, especially for challenging situations, is encouraged.
- When writing the Trial Work Experience Report it is important to provide factual information in the report. General observations or statements must be supported by specific and factual information. There are sample Trial Work Experience Reports available on VR-CPS.
- Although Trial Work Experience Services provide the individual an opportunity to try out employment in a realistic work setting, they differ from Discovery services because they are only used when the VRC has significant concerns about the individual’s ability to benefit from VR services in terms of achieving Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE).
 - TWE Services differ from Discovery services such as Work Based Assessment, Situational Assessment, and Job Shadows because those services are used to conduct career exploration, identify the preferred employment outcome and determine what supports will be necessary to achieve the employment outcome.
 - If the Trial Work Experience demonstrates that the participant is likely to benefit from VR services, anything that was learned about the participant’s potential and support needs should be carried forward as the participant proceeds with services.
- If a participant has been receiving Discovery Services or Job Search Services from an Employment Service provider, and the ES strongly suspects the individual is unable to achieve competitive integrated employment, the ES can express their concerns, and present supporting information to the VRC. The VRC will consider the input from the ES, and the following may occur:
 - The VRC may disagree and encourage the ES to continue with Discovery/Employment services. The team may need to meet to identify strategies to address the barriers.
 - The VRC may agree that there are significant concerns, and may decide that enough activities in discovery or job search have been provided (or maybe one or two other activities need to be completed) to establish there is clear and convincing evidence that the individual is unable to achieve CIE.

- The VRC may agree that there are significant concerns, but not enough has been done to establish clear and convincing evidence that the participant cannot achieve CIE and therefore agree to switch gears to do a TWE.
- Trial Work Experiences should take place in real work settings whenever possible. Depending on circumstances of the individual and local employment options, it may be difficult to find employers that are willing to host a trial work experience.
 - Consider using family and friend networks to develop TWE sites.
 - Consider organizations that utilize volunteers to do work, such as food pantries, libraries, homeless shelters, thrift stores (such as Goodwill, St. Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army), hospitals, churches and other organizations that rely on volunteers to do work.
 - It is important to consider the type of work the individual might be interested in doing, but a TWE is not meant to determine if the individual can do a specific job (work in a retail store, run a cash register, work in manufacturing). The TWE is meant to establish if the individual has the potential for some kind of CIE.