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

Revised April 1, 2022

## B-205: Diagnostic Interview

The VR counselor must conduct a diagnostic interview with every customer. If the VR counselor completes the application, he or she should, in most circumstances, conduct the diagnostic interview at the same time. If another VR staff completes the application for services, the VR counselor should complete the Diagnostic Interview immediately after the application for services is completed. If the VR counselor is unable to complete the Diagnostic Interview at the time that the application for services is completed for any reason, it must be completed within no more than 2 weeks after the application is signed.

The primary purpose of the diagnostic interview is to obtain information that is relevant to determining eligibility. It is an opportunity to identify knowledge, skills, abilities, and key attributes from the customer's perspective.

The diagnostic interview includes:

* brief description of the customer's disabilities (relevant history and current treatment);
* a description of the functional limitations and their impact on employment, education, and independence;
* a record of the customer's perception of problems or issues related to his or her disabilities and need for services;
* the customer's educational and work history;
* the customer's knowledge, skills, and abilities;
* the customer's resources and comparable benefits (or the need to apply for benefits);
* information about the customer's SSI or SSDI status (including verification of benefits or a note about the need to verify benefits);
* the VR counselor's observations throughout interview; and
* a statement of the next actions needed to move the case through the VR process.

The VR counselor prepares for the diagnostic interview by

* reviewing existing information provided by the customer's family;
* identifying specific focus questions about the
  + disability's history and treatment, and
  + customer's perspective on its impact; and
* formulating specific questions to probe work history and identify work-related issues.

If available, review the Counselor's Desk Reference (CDR) for topics that are relevant to the disability, paying attention to the sample questions listed. For additional information about a customer's condition and treatment and the condition's possible impact on employment, consult the Medical Disability Guidelines.

The VR counselor encourages the customer to speak freely since only the customer can describe what he or she has been experiencing regarding perceptions of disability and vocational impact. However, to accomplish the purpose of the interview, the VR counselor must direct the course of the interview to gather the information needed to establish eligibility. In addition to the customer's perspective, the VR counselor records impressions of the customer's behavior that will

* impact the customer's ability to benefit from VR services, or
* help determine a competitive integrated employment goal.

By probing and exploration, the productive diagnostic interview establishes information that helps the VR counselor understand the customer's:

* adjustment to disability,
* support systems,
* resources,
* knowledge,
* skills,
* abilities, and
* key worker attributes.

Exploring the customer's work and disability history may reveal the need for further diagnostic review. The VR counselor orders records and/or purchase evaluations as necessary. For all reported disabling conditions, medical records must be obtained from the appropriate licensed professional and placed in the customer's case file before determining eligibility. The only exception to this requirement is for customers with an observable impairment or for customers with proof of Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Income. For condition-specific required assessments and the policy refer to [B-308-1: Required Assessments and Policy for Selected Conditions](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-b-300" \l "b308-1).

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