

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Jalisa Broussard](#)
Subject: FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Private/Before Publication)
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From: sunset.website@brightleafgroup.com <sunset.website@brightleafgroup.com>
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2026 10:46 AM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission <sunset@sunset.texas.gov>
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Private/Before Publication)

Submitted on Mon, 08/10/2026 - 08:51

Submitted by: Visitor

Submitted values are:

Choose the agency that you would like to provide input about
[Texas Workforce Commission](#)

Public Comments

1

First Name

Rhonda

Last Name

Finney

Organization you are affiliated with

N/A

Email

City

Kyle

State

Texas

Your Comments or Concerns

Testimony to the Texas Sunset Commission

Review of the Texas Workforce Commission – Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Dear Members of the Texas Sunset Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the Texas Workforce Commission's Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) program.

I am submitting this testimony to share my experience as an applicant to the program and to recommend changes that I believe would improve transparency, participant rights, and the delivery of trauma-informed services. Vocational rehabilitation should be a partnership—not a compliance model. The VRS process needs clear safeguards and accountability mechanisms to keep the system on track and ensure that participants' rights and well-being remain central to the process.

My goal in applying to Vocational Rehabilitation Services was straightforward: to obtain stable, meaningful employment that would allow me to rebuild my life after surviving family violence and living with post-traumatic stress (PTS). Employment is not simply an economic goal for me—it is a critical component of long-term safety, stability, healing, and independence.

Unfortunately, my experience with the program led me to voluntarily withdraw my application.

Throughout the intake process, I sought to understand the program's policies, participant rights, evaluation procedures, available services, and employment expectations. I prepared numerous questions regarding eligibility requirements, acceptance of existing medical documentation, the qualifications of mental health evaluators, participant rights, treatment options, and employment outcomes. Rather than receiving clear information that would allow me to make informed decisions, I left uncertain about many fundamental aspects of the program.

As a survivor of family violence, I also explained that trauma-informed care was essential to my ability to participate safely in vocational rehabilitation. I shared my concerns about the impact that the family court system had on my life and the barriers I faced in achieving permanent employment. In my experience, these concerns were not meaningfully acknowledged or incorporated into the planning process.

One issue that particularly concerned me involved the required mental health evaluation. During my meeting with my assigned VRS counselor, I asked whether I could choose my own qualified mental health professional to conduct the evaluation. I was informed that I would need to use a provider selected through the program. I was also left with the understanding that I would be expected to comply with the evaluator's recommended treatment in order to receive services.

For me, this raised significant concerns regarding informed consent and collaborative treatment planning. Effective mental health care depends on shared decision-making between patients and qualified professionals, taking into account an individual's medical history, lived experience, values, and treatment preferences. When treatment recommendations become conditions for receiving vocational services, applicants may reasonably perceive that they have little meaningful choice in their care. In fact, when access to vocational services appears dependent on accepting treatment recommendations, that borders on coercion rather than informed consent.

Another issue arose when I was informed that my file allegedly contained information indicating something that was not accurate and that record needed to be corrected. I subsequently requested documentation identifying the source of the information, copies of the relevant records, and correction of any inaccurate information contained in my file. Accurate records are essential to fair eligibility determinations and to maintaining trust between applicants and the agency.

My experience also highlighted the need for greater transparency. Before participating in evaluations or developing an Individualized Plan for Employment, applicants should receive clear written information explaining:

- The services available through Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- The purpose and role of required evaluations
- Participant rights and responsibilities
- Procedures for requesting a different provider when appropriate
- Procedures for appealing decisions or disputing information contained in agency records
- Expectations regarding treatment recommendations and participant choice

Providing this information at the onset would help applicants make informed decisions and reduce confusion throughout the rehabilitation process.

I respectfully encourage the Sunset Commission to consider the following

recommendations:

1. Strengthen trauma-informed practices throughout Vocational Rehabilitation Services, particularly for survivors of family violence and family court, and individuals living with PTS/PTSD, or other trauma-related conditions.
2. Require applicants to receive a clear written statement of their rights, including procedures for requesting record corrections, filing grievances, requesting review of decisions, and seeking changes in providers where permitted.
3. Improve transparency regarding evaluation procedures by clearly explaining who performs evaluations, how providers are selected, how evaluation results are used, and what options applicants have if they disagree with conclusions or recommendations.
4. Ensure that vocational rehabilitation emphasizes collaborative, person-centered decision-making that respects informed consent and recognizes the importance of individual preferences, values, and lived experience when discussing treatment options.
5. Provide applicants with comprehensive written information describing available services, eligibility requirements, employment supports, and realistic expectations regarding employment outcomes before they commit to participating in the program.

Vocational rehabilitation exists to empower Texans with disabilities to achieve meaningful employment and independence. I believe the program can better fulfill that mission by increasing transparency, respecting participant autonomy, strengthening trauma-informed practices, and ensuring that applicants understand both their rights and the services available to them.

Thank you for considering my testimony and for your work reviewing the Texas Workforce Commission. I appreciate the opportunity to share my experience and hope it contributes to improvements that will benefit future participants across Texas.

Supporting documents are available upon request, including the list of questions I submitted regarding the VRS program.

Your Proposed Solution

I respectfully encourage the Sunset Commission to consider the following recommendations:

1. Strengthen trauma-informed practices throughout Vocational Rehabilitation Services, particularly for survivors of family violence and family court, and individuals living with PTS, PTSD, or other trauma-related conditions.

2. Require applicants to receive a clear written statement of their rights, including procedures for requesting record corrections, filing grievances, requesting review of decisions, and seeking changes in providers where permitted.
3. Improve transparency regarding evaluation procedures by clearly explaining who performs evaluations, how providers are selected, how evaluation results are used, and what options applicants have if they disagree with conclusions or recommendations.
4. Ensure that vocational rehabilitation emphasizes collaborative, person-centered decision-making that respects informed consent and recognizes the importance of individual preferences, values, and lived experience when discussing treatment options.
5. Provide applicants with comprehensive written information describing available services, eligibility requirements, employment supports, and realistic expectations regarding employment outcomes before they commit to participating in the program.

My Comments Will Be Made Public

Yes