Using technology to put people first

How the California Department of Rehabilitation transformed their Vocational Rehabilitation services with WEX's customizable flex card.

Meet the California Department of Rehabilitation.

The California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) provides employment and independent living services for individuals with disabilities through a variety of programs, including the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) employment program.

Their department was facing big administrative challenges.

DOR is committed to providing responsive and timely service delivery to individuals with disabilities. But as the largest VR and independent living program in the country, they were challenged to implement simple and efficient payment processes that put people first.

DOR consumers had limited options for receiving funds to directly pay for eligible VR employment services. For example, a consumer who needed clothing for a job interview would have to pay out of pocket and wait for reimbursement, which isn't a feasible solution for someone who is unemployed. The only other options offered to consumers were outdated payment methods provided by DOR, such as a check, bank draft, or hand-carried authorization document that many merchants were unable to process. Not only were these processes inefficient, they didn't provide the level of privacy or timeliness DOR wanted to offer.

To live up to their core mission of providing person-centered service delivery, it was time for a change.

wex
DOR DEPARTMENT of REHABILITATION
Employment, Independence & Equality

Meet WEX's customizable flex card

WEX's card technology is:

Modern

Our card is designed to automatically approve eligible expenses and communicate with our mobile app and consumer portal, making it easier than ever for participants to manage their funds.

Efficient

Our card supports a stacked offering, so participants do not need a different card for every plan.

Versatile

Millions of people use our card for their traditional employee benefits, COBRA coverage, Medicare Advantage supplemental benefits, and more.

DOR's partnership with WEX resulted in the innovative CalDOR Payment Card

DOR partnered with WEX to transform service delivery for the VR program. In 2022, they introduced the CalDOR Payment Card, powered by WEX.

With this card, thousands of VR consumers can easily access and pay for VR goods and services that support their employment goals, including clothing and tools, textbooks and school supplies, tuition or training fees, transit passes, and more.

DOR's investment in WEX's modern technology provides a better experience for consumers:

"We have to acknowledge this is a major change in the way we do business. You can't implement a major change without a good, consistent partner, and WEX has been that for us."

Sean Nunez,
Redwood Empire District Administrator, California Department of Rehabilitation

DOR's partnership with WEX resulted in the innovative CalDOR Payment Card

Convenience

Thanks to a dramatically increased merchant network and funds for authorized vocational services at their fingertips, consumers can get the items they need from a merchant of their choice.

Privacy

Because the CalDOR Payment Card looks and works just like any other debit card, consumers experience higher levels of confidentiality when they pay for authorized VR goods and services, no longer having to disclose they are a DOR consumer.

Timeliness

Since funds can be loaded in advance and payments can be made in real time to local or online merchants that provide the authorized goods or services, consumers can receive same-day service.

Simplicity

Consumers no longer have to solve for the logistical barriers associated with paper checks, such as not having an address where they can receive mail, not having transportation or a personal banking mobile app to simplify check cashing, or having to pay for unfunded check-cashing fees.

Independence

Beyond the ways that eligible goods and services directly enhance consumer choice, the CalDOR Payment Card Consumer Portal and DOR CPC Mobile App empower consumers to use a computer or mobile device to view their available fund account balances and upload receipts. And for those who need it, basic financial literacy education is inherent to the program design. For example, consumers check and manage the funds that are authorized for goods and services applicable to their employment plans.

The technology provides enhancements for the Department of Rehabilitation, too:

Missional Alignment

One of DOR's core values is to "work in partnership with consumers and other stakeholders to provide services and advocacy resulting in employment, independent living and equality for individuals with disabilities." Using the CalDOR Payment Card as a payment method empowers consumers to achieve their goals.

Modernization

With a modern payment card that is widely accepted by merchants, VR consumers pay for goods and services just like any other customer, and merchants aren't required to complete a lengthy vendor registration process.

Efficiency

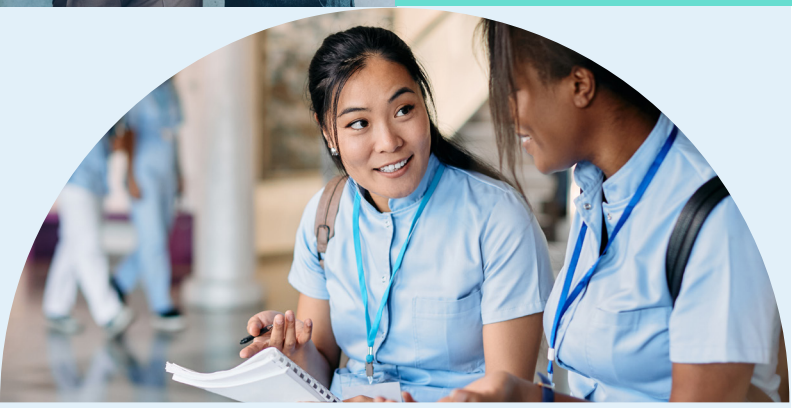
DOR eliminated the administrative burdens of multiple, dated payment methods that required weeks-long reimbursement processes by implementing a modern, real-time solution.

Risk Mitigation

WEX technology gives DOR deeper, real time insight into the use of consumer funds. Not only can unauthorized purchases be declined immediately, but as DOR's database grows, they can make data-driven decisions about eligible expenses, their merchant network, and more.

"Having a good team behind that, like our partners at WEX, allows us to ensure that consumers get the funds they need to succeed. It also empowers us to review transactions in real time, which helps ensure that funds are used appropriately for the VR program."

Sean Nunez,
Redwood Empire District Administrator, California Department of Rehabilitation



And DOR is just getting started

The California DOR's partnership with WEX means that DOR will be able to serve their consumers more efficiently with one, streamlined payment card.

Education and vocational training

Job placement support

Transportation and vehicle costs

Shelter and utilities

Health, nutrition, and personal items

Medical goods and services

"The WEX team has been really great, really supportive, and at the end of the day, it means we can provide better service to our consumers."

Sean Nunez,
Redwood Empire District Administrator,
California Department of Rehabilitation

Behind the scenes:

Implementing an innovative plan design with WEX

From the beginning of the relationship, WEX worked with DOR to understand their current processes, the challenges they faced, and how every detail — from plan design to merchant codes — needed to align both with DOR's mission and the regulations that impact their services.

How big is the CalDOR VR program?

- 79 branch offices in 14 DOR districts provide services to tens of thousands of VR consumers statewide
- 875 VR service delivery team members directly serve consumers
- The DOR expects to have over 20,000 consumers enrolled within the first year of launching the card

"With my team, we're working with administrators in each of our districts to facilitate the program. It's been a heavy load, because we do have a lot of consumers and a lot of districts. But WEX has been great. They answer our questions in a timely fashion, and diligently follow up on each request we have."

Gina Franklin,
Account Supervisor and CalDOR Payment Card Program Manager, California Department of Rehabilitation

"We recognized for many years a need to transform the way our department issues funds to consumers to pay for their vocational rehabilitation program goods and services to achieve their employment goals. We were fortunate to connect with WEX, sit down and talk through our needs with them, and our partners at WEX heard us and delivered exactly what we were looking for with the CalDOR Payment Card. WEX provided us with a portal system which we tested in October 2022. Due to its resounding success, we were very quickly able to expand it to all our district offices to begin enrolling and issuing CalDOR Payment Cards to consumers across the state of California."

Lori Bruno,
Chief Accounting Officer and CalDOR Payment Card Lead, California Department of Rehabilitation

Ready to simplify the way you do business?

WEX is ready to help. Our experienced implementation team and consultants can partner with you to build a modern, streamlined, and compliant solution that drives efficiency, simplifies stakeholder relationships, and inspires consumer trust.

Talk to a WEXer today.

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