

Vocational Rehabilitation Standards for Providers Manual Chapter 9: Assistive Technology Services for Customers with Visual Impairments

Contract Type: Assistive Technology – Customers with Visual Impairments

The contractor and contractor staff that provide services described in this chapter also must comply with Chapters 1–3 of the VR Standards for Providers manual.

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9.1 Overview of Assistive Technology Services

Assistive technology (AT) services are for customers with visual impairments and services include AT baseline and post -training assessments, AT evaluation, and AT training. These services help a customer who is blind or has a significant visual impairment to make informed choices about which AT products meet his or her needs and how to use them.

Assistive Technology Evaluation and Keyboarding must be provided in person. All other assistive technology services may be provided remotely when the VR counselor has indicated approval of remote service delivery on the VR1884, Assistive Technology Services for Customers with Visual Impairments Referral. For more information, refer to VR-SFP 3.4.8 Remote Service Delivery.

To provide training at the trainer's AT evaluation and training facility, the training area must be equipped with desks, monitors, and peripherals to use with a customer's portable or easily transportable assistive technology products. The location where assistive technology services are provided must meet the individual accessibility needs of the customer, so the customer is able to fully engage in the service. See VR-SFP 3.3 Contractor Standards for Physical Locations.

Any request to change a Service Description, Process and Procedure, or Outcomes Required for Payment must be documented and approved by the VR director, using the VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request for Blind and Visually Impaired Services, before the change is implemented. The approved VR3472 must be maintained in the provider's customer case file. For more information, refer to VR-SFP 3.4.11 Contracted Services Modification Request.

For information on signatures refer to VR-SFP sections 3.2.14 Documentation and 3.2.16 Signatures.

All fees for services described in this chapter can be found in VR-SFP 9.6 Assistive Technology Service Fees.

9.2 Staff Qualifications and Training

Before services are provided to customers, the Assistive Technology service provider director must approve the VR3455, Provider Staff Information form completed by staff, and submit the approved form to the provider's assigned Texas Workforce Commission VR regional program specialist. The VR3455, Provider Staff Information form must document qualifications and provide evidence of meeting all qualifications, such as transcripts, diplomas, reference letters, credentials, or licenses.

To provide AT evaluation or AT training, the provider's staff member must pass the proficiency tests for AT evaluation and/or AT training.

Within 30 days of contract signature and 10 business days of an inventory change, the AT evaluation provider director must submit an inventory report of AT products from the Evaluation Products List to the Assistive Technology Unit (ATU) and the assigned RPSS.

9.2.1 Assistive Technology (AT) Evaluators

An AT evaluator must have:

- completed high school or attained a GED;
- six months full-time work experience in a responsible position that provided services to individuals who are blind or have visual impairment;
- passed the Assistive Technology Unit's (ATU) proficiency tests for AT evaluators and trainers; and
- be approved by ATU to provide AT evaluations.

An individual who attended a state school for the blind and visually impaired or who completed a state or federal training program for the blind and visually impaired, may substitute for work experience six months personal experience as an end-user of magnification or reader software including JAWS, ZoomText, and Fusion.

AT evaluation proficiency tests cover each of the AT evaluation product categories. An AT evaluator is approved to evaluate by product category after passing the evaluation proficiency test for each specific product category. For example, an AT evaluator who has passed the proficiency test for screen readers is approved to evaluate customers using products in the screen reader category.

To maintain approval to provide AT evaluations, an AT evaluator must be employed as an AT evaluator within one year of passing the proficiency tests. An AT evaluator who is not employed as an AT evaluator for one year or longer must retest to regain approval status. A person who fails an ATU proficiency test must obtain permission to retest from the ATU manager.

For more information about ATU's proficiency tests or to obtain a list of approved AT evaluators, contact ATU at VR.ATU@twc.texas.gov.

9.2.2 Assistive Technology (AT) Trainers

An AT trainer must have:

- completed high school or attained a GED;
- six months full-time work experience in a responsible position that provided services to individuals who are blind or have visual impairment;

- passed the Assistive Technology Unit's (ATU) proficiency tests for AT trainers; and
- be approved to provide AT training by ATU.

An individual who attended a state school for the blind and visually impaired or who completed a state or federal training program for the blind and visually impaired, may substitute for work experience six months personal experience as an end-user of magnification or reader software including JAWS, ZoomText, and Fusion.

An AT trainer is only approved to train in specific products for which the trainer has passed a proficiency test. When a product significantly changes, an AT trainer must pass an updated category proficiency test to continue training in that product.

To maintain approval to provide AT training, an AT trainer must be employed as an AT trainer within one year of passing the proficiency tests. An AT trainer who is not employed as an AT trainer for one year or longer must retest to regain approval status. A person who fails an ATU proficiency test must obtain permission to retest from the ATU manager.

For more information about ATU's proficiency tests, to schedule a test, or to obtain a list of approved AT trainers, contact ATU at VR.ATU@twc.texas.gov.

9.2.3 Annual Training

Assistive technology (AT) evaluators and trainers must attend the annual Train-the-Trainer seminar for AT service providers presented by the Assistive Technology Unit (ATU). VR does not pay or reimburse the AT service provider or the provider's staff members for costs associated with required training or testing.

If an AT evaluator or AT trainer is unable to attend the Train-the-Trainer seminar, the provider service director must request that the requirement be waived or postponed or that the trainer be allowed to attend an alternate training approved by ATU. The request must be documented and approved by the VR director using VR3490, Temporary Waiver of Staff Qualification.

For more information about ATU's required annual training, contact ATU at VR.ATU@twc.texas.gov.

9.3 Baseline and Post-training Assessments

9.3.1 Baseline and Post-training Assessments Service Description

A VR counselor must purchase a baseline assessment when purchasing training services. A VR counselor can purchase a baseline assessment from an AT evaluator or AT trainer as a separate service without purchasing other services.

The baseline assessment is used to measure the customer's ability to use technology. Completion of the post-training assessment is the final step in the AT training process and is used to report progress and to estimate potential training needs.

The results of the baseline assessment help the AT trainer modify training to meet the customer's unique training needs. Combined with the post-training assessment, it provides a point of comparison to measure the customer's progress. An AT evaluator can also use the results of a baseline assessment to recommend training in a VR1886, Assistive Technology Evaluation.

The baseline assessment and post-training assessment must be provided as indicated in VR1884, Assistive Technology Services for Customers with Visual Impairments Referral or the service authorization. Remote services must be provided following VR-SFP 3.4.8 Remote Service Delivery. The trainer must document the results of the baseline assessment and post-training assessment in VR2902, Assistive Technology Training Baseline Assessment and Post-training Assessment.

9.3.2 Process and Procedure

To authorize services for a customer, the VR counselor sends the AT evaluator or AT trainer a referral packet that includes:

- the VR1884, Assistive Technology Services for Customers with Visual Impairments Referral; and
- an EAS report or basic consultation report.

The AT evaluator or AT trainer must not provide services until the AT evaluator or AT trainer receives a referral packet with a service authorization.

The AT evaluator or AT trainer must:

- maintain a one-AT evaluator-to-one-consumer or one-AT trainer-to-one-customer ratio;

- document observations from the assessment in VR2902, Assistive Technology Training Baseline Assessment and Post-training Assessment; and
- sign the original VR2902.

9.3.3 Outcomes Required for Payment

The AT evaluator or AT trainer documents the required information in VR2902, Assistive Technology Training Baseline Assessment and Post-training Assessment to verify that the AT evaluator or AT trainer:

- delivered the service as indicated in VR1884, Assistive Technology Services for Customers with Visual Impairments Referral;
- delivered training without exceeding the one-AT evaluator to customer or one-AT-trainer-to-one customer ratio;
- provided all necessary accommodations and compensatory techniques necessary to enable the customer to participate in the assessment;
- measured and documented the customer's performance, skills, and progress; and
- completed a post-training assessment.

The AT evaluator or AT trainer must submit a completed report within 10 business days from the completion date of the assessment to the customer's VR counselor.

Payment for the baseline assessment is made when the VR counselor approves a complete, accurate, signed, and dated:

- VR2902, Assistive Technology Training Baseline Assessment and Post-training Assessment completed for the Baseline Assessment; and
- an invoice.

Payment for the post-training assessment is made when the VR counselor approves a complete, accurate, signed, and dated:

- VR2902, Assistive Technology Training Baseline Assessment and Post-training Assessment completed for the Post-training Assessment;
- VR2868, Assistive Technology Training Report; and
- an invoice.

An assessment is an outcome-based service. The VR counselor cannot pay for incomplete services. All topics in the service description and service authorization must be addressed.

9.4 Assistive Technology Evaluations

9.4.1 Assistive Technology Evaluations Service Description

An assistive technology (AT) evaluation provides a VR customer an opportunity to compare AT products under the unbiased guidance of an AT evaluator. The AT evaluation enables the customer to make informed choices about which products might best help the customer succeed in work, school, or vocational training.

An AT evaluation must include:

- an interview,
- an assessment,
- a post-evaluation discussion, and
- documentation.

A baseline assessment is not required for an AT evaluation.

The AT evaluator documents the evaluation results in VR1886, Assistive Technology Evaluation.

9.4.2 Process and Procedure

The VR counselor sends the AT evaluator a referral packet with the following:

- VR1884, Assistive Technology Services for Customers with Visual Impairment Referral;
- an Employment Assistance Specialist (EAS) report or a basic consultation report (if required), and
- service authorization.

An EAS report or basic consultation report is required for all AT evaluations except those limited to handheld magnifiers.

The AT evaluator must:

- provide AT evaluation in person at the AT evaluator's facility;
- maintain a one-AT evaluator-to-one-customer ratio;

- limit the AT evaluation to product categories listed in the employment assistance specialist (EAS) report or basic consultation report;
- show at least two products per category unless the product is in a category of its own on the Evaluation Products List (EPL);
- discuss the results of the AT evaluation and review the customer's product selections with the customer;
- answer questions the customer has regarding the evaluation process and/or the products the customer selected; and
- document the AT evaluation in VR1886, Assistive Technology Evaluation.

The AT evaluator and customer must sign the original VR1886, Assistive Technology Evaluation.

The AT evaluator must not suggest to the customer that the VR counselor or the customer's employer will purchase a product.

For a copy of the latest Evaluation Products List refer to 9.7 Resources.

9.4.3 Outcomes Required for Payment

The AT evaluator documents the information required by the service description on the VR1886, Assistive Technology Evaluation to show that the AT evaluator:

- provided the AT evaluation in person at the AT evaluator's facility without exceeding one-evaluator-to-one-customer ratio;
- documented the results of the AT evaluation in VR1886, Assistive Technology Evaluation; and
- indicated clearly which products the customer selected.

An AT evaluation is strictly limited to the product categories indicated on the EAS report or basic consultation report. All product categories shown to a customer must be on the Evaluation Products List (EPL).

The AT evaluator must clearly indicate in the AT evaluation report if a customer refused to evaluate a product or product category listed on the EAS report or basic consultation report or if the customer requested to evaluate additional products.

The AT evaluator must not show additional categories to the customer without a new service authorization and revised EAS report or basic consultation report that indicates the additional categories.

The AT evaluator must submit to the customer's VR counselor a completed report within 10 working days from the date of the AT evaluation.

The VR counselor pays for the AT evaluation after approving the report and receiving an invoice. The VR counselor approves only reports that are accurate, complete, and meet all service requirements including evaluation category limits indicated in the referral information.

An AT evaluation is an outcome-based service. The VR counselor cannot pay for incomplete services. All topics in the service description and service authorization must be addressed.

For a copy of the latest Evaluation Products List refer to 9.7 Resources.

9.5 Assistive Technology Training

9.5.1 Assistive Technology Training Service Description

Assistive Technology (AT) training is a service provided by an AT trainer who teaches a customer how to use AT products, measures the customer's progress, and reports the results of the training to the customer's VR counselor. AT training helps a customer learn how to use specialized equipment, devices, and software designed specifically to mitigate the effects of significant visual impairment.

An AT trainer can provide keyboarding skills training in a facility using the trainer's equipment and software with up to three customers per trainer or in a customer's home with a one-trainer-to-one-customer ratio.

All other AT training must be provided:

- using the customer's portable or easily transportable AT products at the AT trainer's authorized facility, or in the customer's home, school, or workplace depending on the customer's needs; and
- with a one-trainer-to-one-customer ratio.

Keyboarding skills training must be provided in person. All other AT training may be provided remotely when the VR counselor indicates approval of remote service delivery in VR1884, Assistive Technology Services for Customers with Visual Impairment Referral. For more information, refer to VR-SFP 3.4.11 Contracted Services Modification Request.

An AT trainer cannot provide more than eight hours of training per day per customer. Training can include trainer-guided individual practice time.

AT training includes:

- a baseline assessment;
- planning;
- training sessions with the customer;
- monthly reporting;
- a post-training assessment; and
- final training reporting.

The AT trainer documents:

- assessments result in VR2902, Assistive Technology Training Baseline Assessment and Post-training Assessment; and
- training results in the VR2868, Assistive Technology Training Report.

For a copy of the Assistive Technology Training Guide (ATTG) with a complete list of training subjects and descriptions refer to 9.7 Resources.

9.5.2 Process and Procedure

The VR counselor sends the AT trainer a referral packet with the following:

- VR1884, Assistive Technology Services for Customers with Visual Impairment Referral;
- an employment assistance specialist (EAS) report or basic consultation report;
- VR1886, Assistive Technology Evaluation; and
- a service authorization.

The AT trainer uses the information in the referral packet, the Assistive Technology Training Guide, and the customer's baseline assessment results to modify training to meet the customer's individual needs.

The baseline and post-training assessment are essential to planning and measuring the effectiveness of AT training and are purchased with all AT training.

All service authorizations for AT training must include a line item for each of the following:

- AT training by subject,
- baseline assessment; and

- post-training assessment.

A valid service authorization may include a line item for trainer-guided individual practice time.

The AT trainer must review the referral packet and valid service authorization carefully and contact the VR counselor to report any missing or incomplete documentation. The trainer must not provide services until the VR counselor sends a complete referral packet with a valid service authorization.

If the AT trainer discovers a problem with the customer's equipment, hardware, or software that prevents the trainer from providing training, the trainer may spend up to two hours of training time troubleshooting the problem to resolve it. If the trainer is unable to resolve the issue within two hours, the trainer must contact the customer's VR counselor by email to report the problem and seek assistance. The trainer must document the details of the problem on the in VR2868, Assistive Technology Training Report, including the amount of time the trainer spent troubleshooting.

The AT trainer must document training results on the:

- VR2902, Assistive Technology Training Baseline Assessment and Post-training Assessment; and
- VR2868, Assistive Technology Training Report;

For a copy of the Assistive Technology Training Guide (ATTG) with a complete list of training subjects and descriptions refer to 9.7 Resources.

9.5.3 Outcomes Required for Payment

The AT trainer documents the information required by the service description in VR2902, Assistive Technology Training Baseline Assessment and Post-training Assessment, and VR2868, Assistive Technology Training Report, to verify the AT trainer:

- provided training without exceeding the trainer-to-customer ratio indicated in the Assistive Technology Training Guide (ATTG);
- provided all necessary accommodations and compensatory techniques to enable the customer to participate in the training;
- measured and documented the customer's performance, skills, and progress; and
- completed a post-training assessment.

The trainer must submit the final training report within 10 business days from the date of the last service. The VR counselor pays the invoice after he or she verifies

that all training objectives and outcomes are met, and approves the following required documentation:

- VR2902, Assistive Technology Training Baseline Assessment and Post-training Assessment;
- VR2868, Assistive Technology Training Report; and
- an invoice.

AT training is an outcome-based service. The VR counselor cannot approve required documentation that is incomplete. All topics in the service description and service authorization must be addressed.

If a customer fails to complete the training or fails to meet training objectives, a trainer may request payment for the training hours the customer completed by submitting the required training reports and an invoice. The trainer must explain why the training was unsuccessful.

9.6 Assistive Technology Service Fees

9.6.1 Assistive Technology Service Fees Description

VR pays for AT services according to the AT evaluator- or AT trainer- to-customer ratio, subject, and location of service delivery.

A customer site includes a customer’s home, school, or workplace.

A facility is a service provider’s authorized AT services location.

9.6.2 Assistive Technology Service Fees Table

Service	Ratio	Location	Unit Rate	Hourly Rate
AT Evaluation	1:1	Facility	\$125	NA
AT Training	1:1	Customer site	NA	\$75
AT Training	1:1	Facility	NA	\$40
Baseline Assessment	1:1	Customer site	\$37	NA
Baseline Assessment	1:1	Facility	\$20	NA

Post-training Assessment	1:1	Customer site	\$37	NA
Post-training Assessment	1:1	Facility	\$20	NA
Keyboarding Pre-training Assessment	1:1	Customer site or facility	NA	\$5
Keyboarding Skills Training	1:1	Customer site	NA	\$20
Keyboarding Skills Training	Up to 1:3	Facility	NA	\$10 per customer
Trainer-guided Independent Practice Time	1:1	Customer site or facility	NA	\$10

9.7 Resources

- [Approved Trainers List](#)
- [Assistive Technology Training Guide](#)
- [Evaluation Products List](#)
- [Assistive Technology Unit Proficiency Tests](#)