# VR-SFP Chapter 9: Assistive Technology for Sight‑Related Disabilities

The following sections of the VR Standards for Providers have been revised. These requirements will take effect July 1, 2021.

## 9.1 Overview of Assistive Technology Services

Assistive technology (AT) services for customers who are blind or have visual impairment help a customer make informed choices about which AT products meets his or her vocational (work) or postsecondary educational needs (college or training). With AT training, a customer can learn how to use AT to succeed at work, school, and/or in vocational training.

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 Sight-Related Disabilities Referral. For more information, refer to [VR-SFP 3.6.4.1 Remote Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03%22%20%5Cl%20%22s3-6-4).

Any request to change a Service Definition, Process and Procedure, or Outcomes Required for Payment must be documented and approved by the VR Director using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) for Blind and Visually Impaired Services form 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 3.6.4.2 Evaluation of Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03%22%20%5Cl%20%22s3-6-4).

For information on signatures refer to [VR-SFP 3.11.1 Documentation and Signatures](https://www.twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03#s3-11-1).

## 9.2 Staff Qualifications

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### 9.2.1 Assistive Technology General Requirements

Evaluators and trainers must pay for travel and all associated costs to participate in testing required by the Assistive Technology Unit (ATU) and training for provider staff members. VR does not pay travel costs, including transportation, food, and lodging.

AT evaluators and trainers must provide accurate contact information to the VR ATU to ensure that the information is accurate.

Evaluation providers must submit a current AT inventory list within 30 calendar days of contract signature and submit updated inventory lists upon the purchase of new inventory. Evaluators and/or trainers must obtain new models, upgrades, or versions of approved software within 45 calendar days of product release. ATU prefers evaluators submit up-to-date AT inventory lists by email.

All VR service providers, including AT evaluators and trainers, must have a service authorization before they provide services to VR customers. The service provider must ensure that the service authorization indicates the specific services, dates, and number of hours he or she provides before providing any service to a VR customer. VR cannot pay for services other than what is indicated on the service authorization, including services provided out of date, or in excess of the hours indicated on the service authorization.

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### 9.2.6 Contract Modifications

An evaluator or trainer is authorized to evaluate or train customers for specific products, and to charge for services per his or her contract. An evaluator or a trainer cannot modify a contract to train in a subject area for which he or she has not been approved by ATU.

To charge a special rate for services, such as group skills training not specified in the provider's contract, the evaluator or trainer must obtain written permission using a [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request for Blind and Visually Impaired Services](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) approved by the VR Director. The trainer must keep the signed VR3472 in the customer's record.

Within each service description there is additional information on when and how the VR3472 can be used and completed.

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## 9.3 Assistive Technology Evaluations

### 9.3.1 Assistive Technology Evaluations Service Description

AT evaluations help a customer identify which AT products he or she would choose when presented with more than one product of the same type. Through product demonstration, an AT evaluation gives a VR customer an opportunity to compare competing products under the guidance of an AT expert to determine which products might best address the customer's vocational and/or postsecondary needs. A VR counselor and customer can discuss products the customer evaluated to determine which might most help the customer meet his or her vocational goal when the customer develops his or her individualized plan for employment (IPE). The evaluator reports what the customer said and did when viewing a product.

In the event a VR counselor decides to make a purchase, the customer uses the report to make an informed choice about which products to purchase. The evaluator's recommendation is not a recommendation to make a purchase, but rather, what to purchase in the event a VR counselor makes a purchase.

An AT evaluation is provided in person with the trainer and customer at the same location.

Any request to change a Service Definition, Process and Procedure, or Outcomes Required for Payment must be documented and approved by the VR Director using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) 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 3.6.4.2 Evaluation of Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03%22%20%5Cl%20%22s3-6-4).

For information on signatures refer to [VR-SFP 3.11.1 Documentation and Signatures](https://www.twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03%22%20%5Cl%20%22s3-11-1).Evaluators must deliver AT evaluations in person with both the customer and evaluator present at an authorized evaluation facility. Evaluators must maintain a one evaluator-to-customer ratio. Evaluators cannot deliver evaluations remotely. An evaluator must conduct an AT evaluation using at least two competing products.

The AT evaluations must include the following three components:

* Interview
* Observation and assessment
* Post-evaluation discussion.

When conducting the evaluation, the evaluator must not imply that the VR counselor agrees to make a technology purchase.

Evaluators must only evaluate customers on products and equipment included on the VR-approved products list, including:

* video magnifiers;
* screen magnification programs;
* screen magnification programs with speech;
* screen reader programs;
* refreshable braille displays;
* optical character recognition (OCR) scanning software;
* stand-alone, portable, and USB OCR scanners;
* braille notetakers;
* braille embossers; and
* speech input software.

To show any product that is not included on the approved products list for the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), the evaluator must first request approval from the VR counselor in writing. The VR counselor obtains written approval from ATU through email. If approved, the evaluator must keep the email with the ATU approval in the customer's record.

Questions about the approved products list may be directed to ATU at vr.atu@twc.state.tx.us.

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## 9.4 Baseline Assessments

### 9.4.1 Baseline Assessments Service Description

A baseline assessment is the first step in the AT training process and must be completed before a trainer can deliver training services.

Baseline assessments must be provided as indicated on the VR1884, Assistive Technology Services for Sight-Related Disabilities Referral or the service authorization. Remote services must be provided following [VR-SFP 3.6.4.1 Remote Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03%22%20%5Cl%20%22s3-6-4).

Any request to change a Service Definition, Process and Procedure, or Outcomes Required for Payment must be documented and approved by the VR Director using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) 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 3.6.4.2 Evaluation of Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03%22%20%5Cl%20%22s3-6-4).

For information on signatures refer to [VR-SFP 3.11.1 Documentation and Signatures](https://www.twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03%22%20%5Cl%20%22s3-11-1).

If the baseline assessment information is missing from the EAS report or Basic Consultation report, or if the assessment is over one year old, the trainer must contact the VR counselor to obtain a copy of the customer's valid baseline assessment. If the customer was not assessed, or if the assessment has expired, the trainer must obtain a valid service authorization from the VR counselor to administer the baseline assessment before training the customer.

The trainer must document the results of the baseline assessment on the VR2902, Assistive Technology Training: Baseline Assessments.

Baseline assessments expire one year after the completion date.

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### 9.4.3 Baseline Assessments Outcomes Required for Payment

The trainer documents all the information required by the service description on the [VR2902, Assistive Technology Training: Baseline Assessments](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), to show that:

* services were delivered as indicated on the VR1884, Assistive Technology Services for Sight-Related Disabilities Referral or service authorization;
* the assessment was completed without exceeding the one trainer-to-one customer ratio;
* all necessary accommodations, compensatory techniques, and special needs were provided as necessary for the customer to complete the assessment;
* the customer can identify and define computer hardware;
* the customer understands software types;
* the customer understands the concept of multi-key commands; and
* the customer's typing speed.

The trainer must submit a completed report within 10 working days from the 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 Assessments](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html); and
* 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.

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## 9.5 Assistive Technology Training

### 9.5.1 Assistive Technology Training Service Description

AT training helps a customer learn to use AT, including AT equipment, hardware, computer systems, and software. Training may be provided at a service provider's facility, in the customer's home or workplace, or at a community resource center.

Keyboarding skills training must be provided in person. Other AT training may be provided remotely when the VR counselor has indicated approval of remote service delivery on the VR1884, Assistive Technology Services for Sight-Related Disabilities Referral. For more information, refer to [VR-SFP 3.6.4.1 Remote Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03%22%20%5Cl%20%22s3-6-4).

Except for keyboarding skills training, AT training must be delivered with a one trainer-to-customer ratio using the customer’s equipment and software. One trainer can train keyboarding skills with up-to-three customers at once in an authorized training facility using the facility’s equipment and software.

An AT trainer must follow the training guidelines provided by VR, including the guidelines for administering a baseline assessment, training the customer, and administering a post-training assessment. Training guidelines recommend training content, duration, activities, and measurement criteria. An AT trainer trains the customer using the customer’s equipment or equipment at the customer’s workplace, if applicable.

To provide more training hours than recommended for a training activity, the trainer must obtain approval from the VR counselor. If the VR counselor approves the additional training hours, the trainer must obtain a valid service authorization.

Any request to change a Service Definition, Process and Procedure, or Outcomes Required for Payment must be documented and approved by the VR Director using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) 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 3.6.4.2 Evaluation of Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03%22%20%5Cl%20%22s3-6-4).

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### 9.5.2 Assistive Technology Training Process and Procedure

To authorize training services for a customer, the VR counselor sends the trainer a referral packet that consists of the following:

* a [VR1884, Assistive Technology Services for Sight-Related Disabilities Referral](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/);
* an EAS report or a basic consultation report that is less than one year old.
Exception: An EAS or basic consultation report is not required if the customer is to evaluate a video magnifier (also known as a closed-circuit television or CCTV) and the magnifier does not connect to a computer system; and
* a valid service authorization.

The trainer must not provide services until the VR counselor sends a referral packet with a valid service authorization to the trainer.

The trainer must:

* maintain a ratio of one trainer to no more than three customers;
* document his or her observations from the assessment on the [VR2902, Assistive Technology Training: Baseline Assessments](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/); and
* sign the original VR2902.

#### 9.5.2.1 Exceptions

Any request to change a Service Definition, Process and Procedure, or Outcomes Required for Payment must be documented and approved by the VR Director using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) for Blind and Visually Impaired Services form 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 3.6.4.2 Evaluation of Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03%22%20%5Cl%20%22s3-6-4).

#### 9.5.2.2 Training Report Documentation

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### 9.5.3 Assistive Technology Training Outcomes Required for Payment

The trainer completes each section of the [VR2902, Assistive Technology Training: Baseline Assessments](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), and [VR2868, Assistive Technology Training](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) report to verify that the trainer:

* delivered the service as indicated on the VR1884, Assistive Technology Services for Sight-Related Disabilities Referral;
* delivered training without exceeding the ratio of one trainer to three customers;
* provided all necessary accommodations and compensatory techniques to enable the customer to participate in training;
* measured and documented the customer's performance, skills, and progress; and
* completed a post-training assessment.

The trainer completes the applicable sections of the [VR1888, Assistive Technology Training Results](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), which is a measurement tool that helps the trainer describe the customer's progress for specific training activities at the completion of training.

The trainer must submit the final training report within 10 working days from the date of the last service. The trainer must send the report by encrypted email to the:

* customer's VR counselor; and
* EAS, or VR staff member who completed the Basic Consultation report.

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 Assessments](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html);
* [VR2868, Assistive Technology Training](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) report;
* VR1888, Assistive Technology Training Results; and
* Invoice.

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

If a customer is unable to demonstrate the level of proficiency indicated on the [VR1888, Assistive Technology Training Results](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) at the completion of training, or fails to complete the training, a trainer may request payment for training hours he or she conducted by completing a VR1888, Assistive Technology Training Results and submitting an invoice. The trainer must provide an explanation for the incomplete service in the appropriate section of the VR1888, Assistive Technology Training Results. Payment for incomplete services is at the VR counselor's discretion.

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## 9.6 Assistive Technology Services Fees

### 9.6.1 Assistive Technology On-Site Services Fees

| **Service** | **Unit Rate** | **Hours** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| AT Baseline Assessment | $37.00 each | N/A |
| AT Post-Training Assessment | $37.00 each | N/A |
| Individual AT Training | $75.00 per hour | N/A |
| Group AT Training | $30.00 per hour per customer | N/A |

### 9.6.2 Facility-Based Services Fees

| **Service** | **Unit Rate** | **Hours** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| AT Baseline Assessment | $20.00 each | N/A |
| AT Post-Training Assessment | $20.00 each | N/A |
| AT Evaluation | $125.00 | N/A |
| Individual AT Training | $40.00 per hour | N/A |
| Group AT Training | $30.00 per hour per customer | N/A |
| AT Independent Practice Time | $10.00 per hour | N/A |
| Keyboarding Baseline Assessment | $5.00 each | N/A |
| Keyboarding Post-Training Assessment | $5.00 each | N/A |
| Individual Keyboarding Skills Training | $20.00 per hour | N/A |
| Lab Keyboarding Skills Training | $10.00 per hour | N/A |