

VR-SFP Chapter 5: Orientation and Mobility Services

August 1, 2019

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5.2 Qualifications and Training

Before services are provided, the service provider director must:

- approve- [VR3455, Provider Staff Information Form](#), which is completed by each of the provider's staff members, such as specialists and interns (the form must include the staff members' qualifications [as stated in 5.2.1](#) and provide evidence that the staff member meets the qualifications); and
- submit the approved form to the provider's assigned contract manager and assigned regional program specialist.

5.2.1 Orientation and Mobility Specialist

The O&M specialist must meet one of the following criteria:

- Be certified by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) or the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB)
- Have a degree in O&M from an accredited college or university with an established O&M training curriculum and become certified by ACVREP or NBPCB within one year of being hired by a service provider
- Have at least two years of full-time experience teaching O&M skills for an entity that VR recognizes, such as a rehabilitation center, a Veterans Administration hospital, or an educational system, and:
 - provide three professional references indicating the candidate's ability to teach O&M skills to blind or visually impaired individuals; and
 - be certified by ACVREP or NBPCB within one year of being hired by the service provider.

5.2.1.1 Required Texas Confidence Builders Training for O&M Specialists

In addition to meeting the requirements for education, training, and experience described in- [5.2.1 Orientation and Mobility Specialist](#), all prospective O&M providers must successfully complete the [Orientation and Mobility](#) Texas Confidence Builders training before becoming providers.

Texas Confidence Builders training is a two- to three-day training program offered ~~quarterly~~ in Austin. ~~Providers~~ [While the training is provided free of cost, providers](#) must

pay all costs associated with attending the training program. Contact the state office O&M program specialist to schedule the training.

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5.3 Orientation and Mobility Assessment

5.3.1 Service Description

The assessment includes an evaluation of the customer's O&M skills in multiple situations.

Assessments may be conducted using the customer's functional vision. Functional vision refers to the way in which an individual uses whatever vision he or she has in a given travel situation. Assessments provide an opportunity for customers to recognize that their vision might not meet all their travel needs.

Locations for assessments include a combination of:

- the customer's home and immediate surrounding area;
- public areas, such as a church, park, or college campus;
- commercial areas, such as a bank, store, or mall;
- transit systems, such as paratransit or taxis (if available);
- local buses and similar public transportation (if available);
- rural areas (if applicable);
- residential areas (those with light vehicle and foot traffic and some stop signs);
- small business areas (those with heavier traffic and simple traffic lights);
- downtown areas (those with heavy vehicle and foot traffic and complex traffic lights);
- commercial transportation systems, such as buses, trains, and airplanes (if applicable); and
- travel using low-vision devices (if applicable).

For Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) customers, the OIB worker authorizes a maximum of three hours for the initial assessment to be completed.

The O&M specialist must include in the initial assessment observations of and recommendations on white cane skills. The recommended number of hours allowed for training must include the customer's travel needs, regardless of the mobility tool (dog or white cane). Training with a guide dog must not exceed more than four hours and must be preapproved writing by the VR counselor or OIB worker.

Recommendations for training must be:

- documented under the summary section of [VR2894, Orientation and Mobility Assessment](#); and
- submitted to the VR counselor or OIB worker.

Following the assessment, it is recommended that the O&M specialist reviews the results with the customer and answers any questions that the customer might have about the recommended training.

5.3.2 Process and Procedure

The VR counselor or OIB worker completes [the VR2897, Orientation and Mobility Referral](#), and leaving no blanks and putting NA (not applicable) as needed. After completion of the form, the VR counselor or OIB worker sends it to the provider that has been chosen by the customer ~~and the VR counselor or OIB worker.~~ Included with the referral is information that helps the O&M specialist assess and recommend training for the customer.

The VR counselor or OIB worker is responsible for authorizing an O&M assessment and approving services, including approving the documentation for payment when invoiced.

Based on the results of the O&M assessment, the VR counselor or OIB worker determines the training goal and hours to be funded by VR or OIB. No assessments ~~are made and no~~ training sessions provided are completed before a service authorization is issued.

After submitting [VR2894, Orientation and Mobility Assessment](#), the O&M specialist must contact the customer's VR counselor or OIB worker to discuss the initial assessment. This discussion must be documented and filed in the O&M provider's customer file.

The discussion includes:

- the O&M specialist's recommendations for training (if any), including the:
 - O&M skills needed;
 - proposed completion date; and
 - number of training hours authorized by the customer's VR counselor or OIB worker;
- anticipated delays in services, if any;
- special considerations or extended direct training dates, if any;
- the customer's readiness to begin nonvisual O&M skills training; and
- the customer's understanding of O&M skills training and its potential benefits.

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5.4 Orientation and Mobility Training

5.4.1 Service Description

O&M training prepares an individual who is blind or visually impaired to travel independently with competence and confidence ~~in the customer's usual settings.~~

Based on the results of the evaluation, the VR counselor or OIB worker determines the training goal and hours to be funded by VR or OIB. No training is provided before a service authorization is issued.

All O&M Training services for VR customers are conducted using:

- nonvisual (blindfold) techniques; and
- a rigid (non-folding) white cane with a metal tip.

~~• Exceptions must be:~~

~~discussed with the customer's VR counselor or OIB worker before all O&M training begins;~~ for OIB customers are be conducted using:

- either nonvisual (blindfold) or visual training, whichever better addresses the customer's needs and circumstances
- ~~• fully documented in the service authorization.~~
- a rigid (non-folding) white cane with a metal tip unless a cane with more support is needed.

Before deviating from any of the these standards, the O&M specialist must get prior written approval on VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request, from the VR Director. Approval of the VR3472, Contracted Service Modification request must be documented maintained in the O&M provider's customer case file.

The O&M specialist must discuss the benefits of nonvisual and visual training with each customer. Role modeling and peer support for nonvisual training are encouraged.

The O&M specialist cannot ~~provide~~ conduct more than six hours or fewer than two hours of O&M instruction per day. O&M specialist cannot conduct more than six hours of training ~~on any given in a~~ day, even if multiple customers are served during that day. Billing for O&M services must not exceed six hours per day. Lessons are at least two hours long. Unless allowed unless approved by the service authorization, a customer must not receive more than six or fewer than two hours of O&M instruction per day. an obtained VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request,

For Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind (ILS-OIB) customers, the OIB worker allows no more than five hours of training per day. If

additional training time is needed because of unexpected circumstances, the O&M provider sends a written request to the OIB worker.

- ~~• Upon completion of nonvisual training, the VR counselor or OIB worker may authorize visual training if the customer has requested visual training using his or her informed choice.~~

5.4.2 Process and Procedure

5.4.2.1 General

The VR counselor or OIB worker is responsible for authorizing O&M training for the customer and approving services, including approving the documentation for payment when invoiced.

The provider must not bill for any services other than Orientation and Mobility training, or Orientation and Mobility group training.

Based on the results of the assessment, the VR counselor or OIB worker determines the training goals and hours to be funded by VR or OIB. No training is provided before a service authorization is issued.

- ~~• After submitting VR2894, Orientation and Mobility Assessment, the O&M specialist must contact the customer's VR counselor or OIB worker to discuss the initial assessment and obtain a service authorization to provide training services.~~
- ~~• The discussion includes:~~
- ~~• the specialist's recommendations for training (if any), including the:~~
 - ~~○ O&M skills needed;~~
 - ~~○ proposed completion date; and~~
 - ~~○ number of training hours authorized by the customer's VR counselor or OIB worker;~~
- ~~• anticipated delays in services, if any;~~
- ~~• special considerations or extended direct training dates, if any;~~
- ~~• the customer's readiness to begin nonvisual O&M skills training; and~~
- ~~• the customer's understanding of O&M skills training and its potential benefits.~~

O&M training must not exceed the total number of training hours and type of training authorized by the customer's VR counselor or OIB worker on the service authorization.

Consistent and frequent scheduling is recommended to maximize learning. One two-hour lesson a week is the minimum training allowable. Daily O&M training is considered best practice.

Time spent transporting customers does not count toward training time. O&M specialists are not reimbursed for time spent in the car, even when a customer is present.

The O&M specialist must notify the customer's VR counselor or OIB worker within 24 hours about all:

- missed, cancelled, or rescheduled appointments;
- issues, concerns, or circumstances that might impact or delay planned services; and
- incidents or injuries that occur during training that might negatively impact the customer's health and safety.

~~• Before deviating from any of these standards, the O&M specialist must get written approval on VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request, from the following:~~

- ~~• VR counselor or OIB worker~~
- ~~• VR director~~

If services are interrupted and training cannot be completed as planned, or if services are postponed indefinitely because of unexpected circumstances, the O&M provider must notify the customer's VR counselor or OIB worker within 24 hours.

The O&M specialist must submit required forms and complete the required training under the specifications of the referral and the service authorization.

5.4.2.2 Group Training

VR and OIB encourages O&M specialists to coordinate group training sessions (that is, sessions of up to three customers) when it will benefit the instruction process and better meet the needs of the customers.

The O&M specialist must get approval in writing from each customer's VR counselor or OIB worker before providing group training.

An O&M specialist:

- must not enroll more than 25 customers who are blind and visually impaired in active training; and

- must keep all relevant counselors, OIB workers, and assigned regional program specialist informed by email about the total number of customers in active training.

Active training—Any customer who is receiving an O&M assessment or is enrolled in O&M training is in active training.

5.4.2.3 Travel Aids

The VR counselor or OIB worker ~~provides~~purchases one rigid, long white cane with a metal tip ~~and sleep shade (blindfold) for~~ each customer who is approved to receive an O&M ~~assessment and attend O&M training provided by an O&M specialist or VR teacher.~~

The O&M specialist gives each customer information about how to purchase a white cane. Customers are responsible for replacing white canes and cane tips, buying backup white canes, and making similar purchases.

VR or OIB does not reimburse the O&M service provider for any items provided to a customer by the specialist.

The O&M specialist may recommend additional travel aids or other items to the customer's VR counselor or OIB worker, but the decision to purchase additional items rests solely with the VR counselor or OIB worker.

If a customer uses a guide dog, the customer is assessed by the O&M specialist to determine whether the customer also has proficient white cane skills. Once assessed, the customer may attend O&M training with either a white cane or a guide dog.

If customers need further assessment of and direct training for a guide dog, they must contact the school from which they obtained the dog.

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5.5 Orientation and Mobility Services Fee Schedule

O&M Services	Unit Rate	Comment
O&M Assessment	\$ 60 <u>75</u> .00 per hour	OIB <u>Limit of Limited to</u> three hours per assessment for OIB customers <u>customer</u>
O&M Training—Individualized	\$ 60 <u>75</u> .00 per hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training sessions must last at least two hours • No more than six hours of training allowed per day

		Note: OIB customers <u>Customers</u> are limited to five hours of training per day
O&M Training-Group	\$60 <u>75</u> .00 per hour for the first customer \$30.00 <u>37.50</u> per hour for the second <u>each additional</u> customer \$30.00 per hour for the third customer	Limit of three customers per group Training sessions must last at least two hours No more than six hours of training allowed per day

