# Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual C-200: Technology Services

Revised October 1, 2019

## C-203: Rehabilitation Technology Devices and Services

Because VR uses tax revenue for case service expenditures, the VR has the additional obligation to purchase the least expensive services that meet the functional needs of the customer. VR is the payer of last resort. Comparable benefits must be applied first. After the customer's primary and/or secondary benefit coverage has been applied, VR will pay to the contractor an amount equal to the customer's co-payment, coinsurance, or deductible due. The VR payment will not exceed the insurance-allowed amount or the VR contract rate, whichever is less.

VR counselors may purchase an assistive or adaptive device when it is required to conduct assessments and address a customer's vocational need. Technologically advanced products not shown to be effective by independent clinical evidence are not likely to meet customers' vocational needs in a cost-effective manner and should not be purchased with VR funds.

Before making a purchase, the VR counselor verifies that the product meets TWC-VR's best-value purchasing criteria. See D-200: Purchasing Goods and Services.

The VR counselor should contact the state office program specialist for assistive and rehabilitation technology (PSART) with questions pertaining to TWC-VR best-value criteria as necessary.

### C-203-1: Technology Services Restrictions

While professionals other than rehabilitation engineers may provide assistive technology services, only licensed professional engineers or an ATP may provide rehabilitation engineering services. The VR counselor consults with an engineer or ATP when the service includes design or modification of a product.

Before committing TWC-VR funds, it is important to reach an understanding with the provider about price and delivery. For rehabilitation engineering services provided before individualized plan for employment (IPE) development, use the following RHW specification levels:

* Level 1—Evaluation Services
* Level 2—Other Evaluation Services
* Level 3—Other Evaluation Services
* Level 4—Other Evaluation Services

The VR counselor consults with the PSART for information about providers from which TWC-VR has purchased services.

Before authorizing the purchase any assistive technology with a cumulative cost greater than $5,000, the VR counselor must consult with the state office program specialist for assistive and rehabilitation technology (PSART).

The VR counselor works with the assistive technology specialist (ATS) to complete the purchasing process.

The ATS:

* Prepares a packet using the Assistive Technology Coversheet, follows the instructions, and attaches all required information;
* Submits the packet to PSART mailbox: PSART@twc.state.tx.us;
* Documents in RHW the need for the required review and the submission date of the cover sheet and required information; and
* Reviews the assistive technology review entered in a case note in RHW, and informs the VR counselor when the review is completed.

## C-204: Vehicle Modification Services

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### C-204-2: Purchasing a Vehicle for Modification or a Modified Vehicle

Assisting with the purchase of a vehicle for modification or a vehicle that has already been modified is considered only after all of the following conditions are met:

* every other transportation option has been explored;
* the provision of an accessible vehicle is the most cost-efficient and appropriate approach for the customer; and
* when it is necessary for the customer to participate in other planned services, such as vocational training and job-related services, or for employment.

The primary objective of vehicle purchasing assistance is to defray initial costs that the customer must pay to take possession of the vehicle to be modified, such as:

* down payment;
* registration fees; and
* initial insurance.

VR does not purchase vehicles outright for customers.

#### Criteria for Assistance

Consider assisting with a vehicle purchase only when all the following conditions are met:

* Because of the disability, the customer requires a modified vehicle, and accessible transportation is not otherwise available within the same time frame under which the modification would be available.
* No comparable services or benefits are available to meet the customer's transportation needs.
* Relocation to an area with accessible transportation is not feasible.
* The customer has enough income, or the planned employment goal will result in enough income, to cover future payments, insurance premiums, gasoline, and routine maintenance costs.

The justification for the purchase of any vehicle purchase assistance or modifications must be documented in a case note. All vehicle modifications must be included as a planned service in the customer's IPE.

Vehicle modifications can range from under $1,000 for simple hand controls to many thousands of dollars for van conversions with complex driving systems. Deciding that vehicle modification is reasonable and necessary requires the VR counselor to carefully consider numerous factors, including at least the following, and document all considerations in the customer's case notes:

#### Available Transportation Alternatives

If community transportation is available, the VR counselor explains why community transportation is unable to meet employment needs.

If community transportation is not available, the VR counselor analyzes options for relocating to where transportation is available.

Compare the cost of modifications to the cost of community transportation. Purchase and installation of hand controls in a customer's vehicle may be more cost effective than community transportation.

Consider equipping the vehicle for the customer as a passenger when a driver is readily available or when it is cost effective for the customer to arrange for a driver.

The costlier the modification, the less cost effective it is over community transportation.

#### Cost of Modification

Consider the life of the equipment and associated maintenance costs and the customer's ability to maintain both the vehicle and any installed adaptive equipment. Get estimated lifetime maintenance costs from the modification provider. The VR counselor must review the warranty and maintenance schedule with the customer and document this counseling and guidance in a case note.

The costlier the modification, the more critical customer stability is. The VR counselor must be able to anticipate that a customer with a progressive disability will be able to drive, without major changes, for the life of the equipment.

#### Complexity of Modification

The more complex the modification, the more critical it is that the customer properly maintain the equipment in accordance with manufacturer instructions so that the warranty remains valid.

Additionally, complex modifications mean more frequent breakdowns. Dependability of the modification in meeting the customer's needs is critical. The VR counselor evaluates how this will affect employment and documents this in a case note in RHW as part of the decision-making process.

#### Approval and Assistance Cap

All vehicle modifications that cost more than $2,500 require the VR Manager approval and documentation in RHW.

TWC assistance with the initial purchase of a vehicle is a maximum of $4,000 down payment, based on demonstrated financial need, and requires regional director approval (see C-204-11[: Helping the Customer with Payments for a Modified Vehicle](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-c-200%22%20%5Cl%20%22c204-11)). Payment is in the form of a warrant payable to the customer, which the customer signs over to the vehicle dealer.

#### Payment Procedure

All payments are made directly to the customer in a warrant mailed to the field office by the following process:

1. Create the service authorization.
2. Once the pay is authorized, email the rtm.revenue.accounting@twc.state.tx.us email box and request the Special Handling Form F-29 (695).
3. Complete the form and send back to rtm.revenue.accounting@twc.state.tx.us. This must be completed before the warrant number is issued. This will insure that the warrant is sent to the field office.
4. VR staff must hand-deliver the warrant to the customer at the vehicle dealer's location, and then witness the customer signing over the warrant to the dealer as the vehicle down payment.

### C-204-3: Van Modifications, Lowered-Floor Minivans, and Limitations on Vehicle Modification Services

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### C-204-4: Evaluating the Driver

Whenever possible, use the services of a certified driving rehabilitation specialist (CDRS). Driving evaluations must be within six months to be included in [VR3408, Vehicle Modification Evaluation](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html).

The customer must complete driver training with the appropriate equipment if the customer has:

* never driven;
* never driven with adaptive equipment;
* progressive disabilities; or
* had significant changes in his or her condition.

Behind the wheel training hours vary based on the needs of the customer. Consultation with PSART and VR Manager approval are required to exceed 20 hours of cumulative driver’s training.

The customer must have a valid driver's license with appropriate restrictions before a vehicle modification begins.

In some circumstances, however, a customer without a driver's license may not be able to obtain one until the modified vehicle is available. If there is reasonable assurance that the customer can operate a modified vehicle safely, an instruction permit (valid for one year) may suffice. In this case, complete only those modifications that will allow the customer to take the Texas Department of Public Safety driving test and complete the remaining modifications after the customer has a driver's license.

### C-204-5: Evaluating Used or Pre-Owned Vehicles

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### C-204-6: Reviewing the Modification Plan before the Vehicle Is Purchased

Before the customer purchases a vehicle , the VR counselor must request a pricing review of the modification plan with TTI. Vehicle purchases must be approved by the VR Manager, include an electronic approval case note, and then be documented in the IPE (see C-204-2[: Purchasing a Vehicle for Modification or a Modified Vehicle](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-c-200%22%20%5Cl%20%22c204-2)),.

VR staff ensures that:

* the make, model, year, and mileage of the vehicle that the customer plans to purchase are in the completed [VR3408](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html); and
* all steps in [C-204-4: Evaluating the Driver](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-c-200#c204-4) are completed unless the customer is a passenger only.

Reviews by TTI and/or the PSART provide valuable information about the proposed modification.

VR staff submits all modifications to TTI for review through the [TTI-TWC website](https://vr.tti.tamu.edu/). Reviews under $1,500 are at no cost. For reviews over $1,500, TTI reviews determine whether the:

* provider's quoted cost of the modification equipment is correct,;
* CDRS's prescription appears to meet the customer's needs; and
* specifications for equipment meet TWC-VR standards.

TTI reviews submitted electronically through the TTI-TWC website are immediately acknowledged by TTI via email to the individual submitting the review. The process can take up to 10 business days after receipt of all appropriate documents submitted electronically through the TTI-TWC website. TTI reviews documentation and sends a review letter to the VR counselor. PSART or the ATS addresses any findings by TTI with providers and sends the corrected VR3408 to TTI.

Before issuing the service authorization for the modification, verify that the vehicle purchased is the same vehicle described in the submitted packet.

### C-204-7: Obtaining the Modification Proposal

The VR counselor and the customer together select an approved service provider. The VR counselor gives the customer a list of approved service providers in the customer's geographical area. If the customer has no preference, the VR counselor may consult with the ATS, VME SME or PSART before selecting a service provider.

At no cost to VR, the mobility provider prepares a proposal for the modification using [VR3408, Vehicle Modification Evaluation](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html). Before completing and/or submitting the proposal, the service provider must meet with the customer to collect information on the type of mobility required and the customer's weight and height while in or on the mobility device, and to discuss options available to the customer.

After the proposal is received, the VR counselor and customer review the proposed modification to determine if they are reasonable and necessary for achieving the planned employment goal, consulting with the ATS, SME, PSART, or CDRS as needed.

After the receipt of the proposal and completion of TTI's review, approval by the VR Manager, and the IPE has been updated, a service authorization must be issued before the mobility provider begins the vehicle modification process.

### C-204-8: Determining the Required Documentation for Modifications

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### C-204-12: Purchasing Equipment and Modification Repairs

In certain circumstances, the VR counselor may sponsor repairs to adaptive equipment and vehicle modifications. See C-1400: Supplemental Services, C-1402: Transportation Services, for additional information.

To sponsor equipment repairs, VR:

* obtains a price quote;
* submits a repair pricing review electronically to TTI (see the [TTI-TWC website](https://vr.tti.tamu.edu/));
* obtains VR Manager approval if the repairs are more than $2,500, as estimated by TTI's pricing review;
* ensures the safety of the modification (for example, provision of tie-downs); and
* issues a service authorization to a service provider that is both on the list of approved providers and authorized by the manufacturer to repair the equipment.

Upon completion of the repair work or modifications, the ATS or VME SME must inspect the work before the vehicle is released to the customer. The ATS or VME SME inspecting the vehicle must review the driver's evaluation recommendations before releasing the vehicle and be sure that additional behind-the-wheel training is not recommended. If additional driver training is recommended, the VR counselor does not release the vehicle. The ATS or VME SME contacts the driver's trainer to arrange for the additional behind-the-wheel training before releasing the vehicle to the customer.

Note: VR does not reclaim equipment that is broken, outdated, or no longer under warranty. If in doubt, the VR counselor contacts the PSART.

If VR participated in the cost of the vehicle modifications and a customer's vehicle is involved in a collision, or in the event of a customer's death, the VR counselor contacts the PSART in the state office.

## C-205: Jobsite and Home Modification Services

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### C-205-1: Obtaining an Assessment of the Jobsite or Home

Before modifying the customer's jobsite or home, the VR counselor purchases an assessment from a licensed occupational therapist (OT), physical therapist (PT) ATP, or professional engineer (PE) specializing in assistive technology. Assessment services identify options that will allow the customer to:

* work as effectively as possible; and/or
* function as independently as possible.

For assessments specific to farm or ranch employment, the VR counselor considers purchasing services from the [Texas AgrAbility Project](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/drs/programs/vr/docs/TxAgrabilityGuidFinal.doc).

#### Procedure for Obtaining an Assessment

The VR counselor uses the following procedure to obtain the assessment of potential modifications to the customer's jobsite or home:

1. Complete:
	* [VR3394, Job Site Modification Assessment Referral](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/gl/html/vocational_rehab_forms.html); and/or
	* [VR3395, Home Modification Assessment Referral](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/gl/html/vocational_rehab_forms.html).
2. Pay upon receipt of assessment report, which is usually provided within 10 days of service.

If the assessment includes a recommendation for durable medical equipment, refer to C-704: Durable Medical Equipment.

If applicable, VR staff ensures that the customer signs the release on [VR3394, Job Site Modification Assessment Referral](http://intra.twc.state.tx.us/intranet/gl/html/vocational_rehab_forms.html), specifying what customer information the OT, PT, or PE may provide to the employer.

#### Exceptions to Obtaining an Assessment

The VR Manager may grant an exception to the requirement to have an OT, PT, ATP, or PE assessment of the jobsite or home modification when:

* no OT, PT, ATP, or PE can be located to provide the service, and the VR Manager is satisfied that a reasonable search has been made to find one;
* the VR Manager has consulted with the RPS or the PSART, as documented in the case file, and the reason that a comprehensive modification assessment is not necessary is also clearly documented (for example, the customer requests help in replacing a piece of equipment); or
* the use of an OT, PT, ATP, or PE will cause an unreasonable delay that could result in an undue hardship for the customer. (For example, a low-cost modification to a jobsite would allow the customer to maintain employment, and the employer will not wait for the assessment.)

### C-205-2: Approvals and Other Requirements for Jobsite or Home Modifications

Before committing to a jobsite or home modification in an IPE, VR counselors must consult with the state office PSART and meet the following requirements:

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| **Service** | **Approvals** | **Other Requirements** |
| Jobsite modification | All jobsite modifications require VR Manager approval before being included in the customer's IPE. | VR-sponsored modifications are limited to adding items or equipment that can be removed without permanent damage to the employer's property if the customer terminates employment, changes job assignments, etc.Before considering VR sponsorship, the VR counselor reviews the employer's responsibility under the ADA. |
| Home modification | All home modifications costing more than $1,000 require VR Manager approval before being included in the customer's IPE and documentation in the case folder. | Adaptive equipment may require installation but usually does not result in permanent structural changes. Household equipment may be specially designed, selected, or altered to enable the customer to perform duties despite his or her functional limitations.Modifications are limited to equipment that can be removed from the residence without permanent damage to the property if the customer moves or fails to cooperate in achieving the planned objective. |

To submit a jobsite or home modification to the state office PSART**,** the assistive technology specialist (ATS) refers to C-203-1: Technology Services Restrictions.

### C-205-3: Procedure for Purchasing a Jobsite Modification

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