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

Revisions effective September 1, 2020

## 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.

When working with individuals who are blind or visually impaired, the delivery of AT Services including evaluations, baseline assessments and training, is provided in person with the trainer and customer at the same location.

For information on signatures refer to VR-SFP 3.11.1 Documentation and Signatures.

## 9.2 Staff Qualifications

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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](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html). 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.

### 9.2.7 Unannounced On-Site Visits

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## 9.3 Assistive Technology Evaluations

### 9.3.1 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. AT evaluations cannot be provided remotely without a VR3472 approved by the VR director.

When the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), federal, state, and/or local governments issue health and safety protocols such as social distancing, AT evaluations can only be provided with a VR director approved VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request.

The VR3472 must include:

* how the service will be delivered:
  + in person, remotely, or a combination thereof;
  + following health and safety protocols; and
  + meeting the customers individual training needs,
* justification for need of the service; and
* verification the customer has agreed to participate in the services as described above.

An evaluator must conduct an AT evaluation for each customer at the evaluator's facility using at least two competing products (customer-to-evaluator ratio must be 1:1). If only one version of a product is available, the evaluator must request approval from the customer's 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.

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](mailto:vr.atu@twc.state.tx.us).

### 9.3.2 Process and Procedure

The VR counselor sends the evaluator a referral packet that consists of the following:

* A [VR1884, Assistive Technology Services for Sight-Related Disabilities Referral](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html);
* 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 evaluator must:

* maintain a one-to-one evaluator-to-customer ratio;
* limit product categories to only those indicated on the EAS Consultation report or Basic Consultation report;
* document his or her observations from the evaluation interview using the [VR1886, Assistive Technology Evaluation](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html);
* discuss the results of the evaluation and review equipment recommendations with the customer; and
* answer any questions the customer has regarding the evaluation process and/or recommendations.

The evaluator and customer must sign the original VR1886. The evaluator must not promote one product over another during the evaluation

### 9.3.3 Outcomes Required for Payment

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## 9.4 Baseline Assessments

### 9.4.1 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.

A baseline assessment is provided in person with the trainer and customer at the same location. Baseline assessments cannot be provided remotely without a VR3472 approved by the VR director.

When the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), federal, state, and/or local governments issue health and safety protocols such as social distancing, baseline assessments can only be provided with a VR director approved VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request.

The VR3472 must include:

* how the service will be delivered:
  + in person, remotely, or a combination thereof;
  + following health and safety protocols; and
  + meeting the customers individual training needs,
* justification for need of the service; and
* verification the customer has agreed to participate in the services as described above.

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.

### 9.4.2 Process and Procedure

To authorize 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/index.html); and
* an EAS report or basic consultation report that is less than one year old.

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 one-to-one trainer-to-customer ratio;
* document his or her observations from the assessment on the [VR2902, Assistive Technology Training: Baseline Assessments](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html); and
* sign the original VR2902.

### 9.4.3 Outcomes Required for Payment

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## 9.5 Assistive Technology Training

### 9.5.1 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.

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.

AT training is provided in person with the trainer and customer at the same location. AT training cannot be provided remotely without a VR3472 approved by the VR director.

When the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), federal, state, and/or local governments issue health and safety protocols such as social distancing, AT training can only be provided with a VR director approved VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request.

The VR3472 must include:

* how the service will be delivered:
  + in person, remotely, or a combination thereof;
  + following health and safety protocols; and
  + meeting the customers individual training needs,
* justification for need of the service; and
* verification the customer has agreed to participate in the services as described above.

If the trainer requests hours of additional training time exceeding the VR counselor's approval level, he or she must obtain permission from the VR counselor to modify his or her contract. If the VR counselor agrees, the VR counselor provides the trainer with a [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification](https://www.twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html), signed by the director of VR Services. The trainer must keep the signed VR3472 in the customer's record.

#### 9.5.1.1 Keyboarding Skills

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