# Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual Section C-300

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## Notes on the Manual

On October 1, 2017, Texas Workforce Commission’s Blind Services Division and Rehabilitation Services Division combined to create a single designated state unit (DSU) to administer the vocational rehabilitation program for Texans with disabilities.

The combined Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual (VRSM) was initially published on October 1, 2017. The latest update to this manual is reflected in the chapters below.

Please note that VRSM includes links to information that is intended to provide additional decision-making supports to VR staff. Some of this information may not be available to individuals who are accessing the VRSM outside of TWC's firewall. Copies of materials that cannot be accessed directly through links can be made available upon request.

Substantive revisions to the content are noted in the VRSM List of Revisions. Any printed versions may not contain the latest policy changes.

If you have any questions about VRSM content, please contact the TWC Vocational Rehabilitation Division Policy Team at state office by sending an email message to [vrsm.support@twc.texas.gov](mailto:vrsm.support@twc.texas.gov).

## Manual Overview

The VR Services Manual:

* helps ensure VR customers receive quality services to assist them in achieving successful competitive integrated employment outcomes as a result of their participation in vocational rehabilitation services.;
* helps to ensure taxpayer funds are spent wisely and each purchase paid for with public funds represents full value to the taxpayer; and
* provides published policies and procedures for maintaining compliance with federal and state laws, statutes, and rules or regulations.

The latest update to this manual is reflected in the chapters below. Any printed versions may not contain the latest policy changes.

# Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual C-300: Communication Services

## C-301: Legal Authorization

Federal law requires states to ensure that staff is made available, either directly by the designated state unit or through a contract, to address the individual communication needs of customers:

"The vocational rehabilitation services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must describe how the designated State unit includes among its personnel, or obtains the services of—

(1) Individuals able to communicate in the native languages of applicants, recipients of services, and eligible individuals who have limited English proficiency; and

(2) Individuals able to communicate with applicants, recipients of services, and eligible individuals in appropriate modes of communication.

(f) Coordination with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The vocational rehabilitation services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must describe the procedures and activities the State agency will undertake to coordinate its comprehensive system of personnel development under the Act with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act."

34 CFR §361.18(iii)(e)(1-2)

## C-302: Typical Services

Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, and/or deafblind customers may require services such as:

* meeting with a VR counselor to evaluate the customer's needs, as related to the customer's sensory loss;
* working with a VR counselor who has a specialty caseload to address:
  + communication issues and options;
  + diagnostics and evaluations;
  + adaptive devices and other accommodations for work, independent living, and vocational or academic training;
  + specialized training options;
  + ongoing support services, such as Medicaid waiver programs;
  + training options for teens and young adults; and
  + support services, resources, and adaptive devices for teens and young adults for use in an educational environment;
* attending Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) meetings and participating in transition planning with the transition counselor;
* facilitating communication and accommodations; and
* ordering recommended adaptive devices, with the approval of the VR counselor.

If a counselor has determined that an exception will facilitate a customer’s progress and there is not an approval exception listed in policy, counselors are encouraged to staff the request through their chain of management to the Deputy Division Director for Field Services for consideration. VRSM clearly states when no exceptions are allowed.

### C-302-1: Policy

Customers are referred to deafblind field support services when:

* hearing loss is medically documented;
* hearing loss is suspected; or
* the customer is deafblind.

## C-303: Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program

### C-303-1: Procedure

The [HHS Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS)](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing) and the Public Utility Commission (PUC) operate the Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program (STAP) for individuals whose disabilities interfere with their ability to effectively use the telephone network.

Through STAP, DHHS provides qualified individuals with disabilities vouchers to purchase basic specialized telecommunications equipment. For a list of acceptable telecommunications devices and the value of the voucher for each device, see [DHHS Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program (STAP).](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing/specialized-telecommunications-assistance-program-stap)

Individuals with disabilities who have not used a DHHS STAP voucher in the past five years may apply for help through DHHS.

DHHS does not purchase the device for the customer. The customer pays all costs above the STAP voucher amount.

To obtain a STAP application:

* contact DHHS directly;
* contact the STAP specialist for the relevant DHHS region (see the [regional list of local service providers);](https://dhhs.hhsc.state.tx.us/providers/contractors.asp) or
* visits the [DHHS Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program (STAP)](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing/specialized-telecommunications-assistance-program-stap) web page.

When submitting the application, include a copy of a document serving as valid proof of the customer's Texas residency as shown on the application.

The VR counselor may certify the customer's STAP application based on whether the customer meets the disability and program criteria.

Before signing the application, the VR counselor verifies the following forms of identification on the customer's application:

* Social Security number
* Proof of residency

The VR counselor mails the completed application with confirmation of identity and proof of residency to:

DHHS STAP  
P.O. Box 12607  
Austin, Texas 78711

DHHS does not accept applications by fax or email.

Once DHHS approves the application, DHHS issues a voucher to the eligible customer that identifies the type of device authorized.

The customer has 180 days after receiving the voucher to purchase the device from a registered PUC vendor.

For a list of registered vendors, see the [STAP Vendor Search](https://www.staptexas.org/Login/vendorsearchrpt.aspx) page. For additional information about the STAP program, see the [DHHS Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program (STAP).](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing/specialized-telecommunications-assistance-program-stap)

For questions concerning STAP, the VR counselor contacts DHHS:

* by phone at 512-407-3250 (voice) or 512-407-3251 (TTY); or
* by email at [stap@hhsc.state.tx.us](mailto:stap@hhsc.state.tx.us).

## C-304: Hearing Aids

For policy and procedure on the purchase of hearing aids, see VRSM C-704: Durable Medical Equipment.

## C-305: Interpreter Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Customers

An interpreter for deaf and hard of hearing customers conveys messages between individuals without contributing additional content to the dialogue. TWC Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) uses interpreter services to facilitate communication with customers during the rehabilitation process.

Interpreter services are provided by qualified interpreters and include:

* sign language and oral interpretation for customers who are deaf or hard of hearing; and
* tactile interpretation for customers who are deafblind.

### C-305-1: Legal Authorization

When developing an individualized plan for employment, the designated state unit must provide all required information in the native language or mode of communication of the individual or the individual's representative. Refer to 34 CFR §361.45(c).

Appropriate modes of communication are defined in 34 CFR §361.5(4) as "specialized aids and supports that enable an individual with a disability to comprehend and respond to information that is being communicated. Appropriate modes of communication include, but are not limited to, the use of interpreters, open and closed-captioned videos, specialized telecommunications services and audio recordings, Braille and large print materials, materials in electronic formats, augmentative communication devices, graphic presentations, and simple language materials."

### C-305-2: Maintaining Customer Confidentiality

VR staff informs the interpreter and customer that information provided is maintained in confidence. For more information, refer to VRSM A-205: Confidentiality and Use of Customer Records and Information.

### C-305-3: Using Certified Interpreters

VR must use certified interpreters whenever possible.

The [Board for Evaluation of Interpreter (BEI) Registry](https://bei.hhsc.state.tx.us/PublicInterpreterSearch/Search) must be used to find a certified interpreter. The registry might include certified interpreters that do not have a contract with VR.

A certified interpreter holds at least one of the following certificates of competency from one of the following organizations:

* The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID):
  + Interpretation Certificate (IC)
  + Transliteration Certificate (TC)
  + Reverse Skills Certificate (RSC)
  + Comprehensive Skills Certificate (CSC)
  + Master Comprehensive Skills Certificate (MCSC)
  + Specialist Certificate—Legal
  + National Interpreter Certification (NIC) Advanced
  + National Interpreter Certification (NIC) Master
  + Certificate of Interpretation (CI)
  + Certificate of Transliteration (CT)
  + Oral Interpreting Certificate: Spoken to Visible (OIC:S/V)
  + Oral Interpreting Certificate: Visible to Spoke (OIC: V/S)
  + Conditional Legal Interpreting Permit—Relay (CLIP-R)
  + Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI)
* National Association of the Deaf (NAD):
  + NAD III (Generalist)
  + NAD IV (Advanced)
  + NAD V (Master)
* BEI, under Texas Health and Human Services Office for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (ODHHS):
  + Level I Certificate
  + Level II Certificate
  + Level III Certificate
  + Level III Intermediary Certificate
  + Level IV Certificate
  + Level IV Intermediary Certificate
  + Level V Certificate
  + Level V Intermediary Certificate
  + Basic Certificate
  + Advanced Certificate
  + Master Certificate
  + Court Interpreter Certificate
  + Oral Certificate
  + Trilingual Advanced Certificate
  + Trilingual Master Certificate
  + Morphemic Sign System (MSS) Certificate
  + Signing Exact English (SEE) Certificate
  + Medical Interpreter Certificate

If an interpreter is needed, but is not available, a VR staff member who is fluent in sign language may facilitate communication by meeting in the VR office or in a similar setting with VR staff and the customer or other individuals who are deaf. While a valid credential is preferred, VR staff members who are fluent in sign language do not have to be certified or credentialed to communicate with customers as long as they are not acting as an interpreter.

A VR staff member is prohibited from serving as an interpreter during an appeals process. See VRSM A-200: Customer Rights and Legal Issues.

VR staff members who are fluent in sign language and hold a valid credential must not provide interpreting services to communicate with a TWC customer outside of the office, except as a last resort and after VR Manager approval is obtained.

Additional information on certification levels and recommended settings is available at [Situations and Recommended Interpreter Certification Levels](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/provider-portals/assistive-services-providers/board-evaluation-interpreters-certification-program/how-select-right-sign-language-interpreter) on the ODHHS website.

### C-305-4: Noncertified Interpreters

A noncertified interpreter is an individual who lacks certification but can interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively and expressively, using all necessary specialized vocabulary. A noncertified interpreter can be a hearing interpreter or a deaf interpreter.

When a certified interpreter is not available, VR staff may use a noncertified interpreter who is otherwise competent to interpret.

A noncertified interpreter may be used with the customer's written consent. The customer must complete a Form VR3104, Acknowledgement for Noncertified Interpreter. The Form VR3104 must be completed indicating the name of the noncertified interpreter or the college or university on the form. The signed and dated Form VR3104 is filed in the customer's case file.

The customer may revoke, in writing, the written consent any time after signing the Form VR3014.

A noncertified interpreter may not be used in the following settings:

* Medical
* Legal
* Psychiatric

### C-305-5: Purchasing Interpreter Services

Ordinarily, payment for interpreter services must not exceed the cost listed on the [HHS Communication Services for State Agencies (CSSA)](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates) fee schedule. Contracted interpreters must be used when they are available. Only when a contracted interpreter is not available may a non-contracted interpreter be used.

Note: The use of non-contracted interpreters must comply with VRSM D-205: Purchasing Threshold Requirements. Every effort must be made to deliver services at the regular (day) rates.

When vocational services are needed at night or on a weekend, the VR counselor must negotiate for the lowest rate.

Note: A separate service category for Pre-ETS Interpreter and CART services must be used when purchasing these services for Pre-ETS. For more information, refer to the Pre-ETS Desk Reference Part 2: Pre-ETS Purchasing Guidance and Menu of Services found on the Transition Services for Students and Youth with Disabilities Intranet page.

For specific policies for interpreters, refer to VR-SFP Chapter 24: Communication Access Services.

### C-305-6: Purchasing Interpreter Services from Colleges and Universities

Unless noted in the terms of the contract, fees in the HHS CSSA fee schedule do not apply to contracted institutions. VR shares contracts with several colleges and universities to offset part of the cost for interpreter services. Rates are determined by the contract.

Payments made to colleges and universities that are not under a VR contract must comply with the established [HHS CSSA fee schedule](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates).

### C-305-7: Paying an Out-of-State Provider

When an out-of-state provider performs interpreter services:

* in Texas, the established fees apply; or
* outside of Texas, the maximum allowable fee is the highest in-state fee for the applicable certification level.

### C-305-8: Procedures for Purchasing Interpreter Services

The rate for interpreter services depends on the:

* HHS region in which the service is provided;
* interpreter's certification level; and
* day and time when the service is required (day, evening, weekend, or holiday). See [HHS CSSA Maximum Rates](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates).

Purchases of services from interpreters with Court Reporter Certification Levels A–C must be justified by VR field staff and reviewed by the deaf and hard of hearing program specialist before a service authorization for these specialty levels of interpreting may be issued.

VR purchases interpreter services according to the following procedures:

1. The customer and VR counselor agree on:
   * the type of interpreter (oral or sign language);
   * the certification level needed (for appropriate certification levels, see the [Situations and Recommended Interpreter Certification Levels—Settings](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing/how-select-right-sign-language-interpreter)); and
   * the customer's preferred provider, if appropriate.
2. The customer selects the provider from among those available.
3. VR staff contacts the contracted interpreter service provider or the non-contracted interpreter service provider to request services and indicates:
   * the certification level needed;
   * the date, time, and location; and
   * how the provider's quoted fee compares to the maximum allowable fee, negotiating with the service provider when necessary.
4. The service provider provides the name and certification level of the assigned interpreter.
5. VR staff informs the customer about the assigned interpreter.
6. VR staff obtains agreement from the customer that the customer will attend the appointment. The customer agrees to notify VR staff at least 48 hours before the appointment if he or she will not be able to attend the appointment. VR staff documents the agreement in a case note in RHW.
7. VR staff issues a service authorization for the approved services that contains the following information:
   * A line item for the administration fee using the specifications for the level of interpreting being requested
   * A line item for each hour using the number of hours as the quantity (no lump sum amounts) for each day of services being requested
   * The location where the service is to be provided
   * A line item for reimbursement of travel costs (for contracted providers only)
8. VR staff:
   * receives the provider's invoice;
   * retains receipts for travel costs (for contracted providers only); and
   * verifies the amount charged against the maximum allowable fee in the [HHS Communication Access Maximum Rates](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/vendor-contractor-information/cssa-maximum-rates).
9. VR staff authorizes payment for the services in RHW.

VR pays cancellation fees to interpreters when services are cancelled less than 48 hours before the time of the scheduled service, including cancellation upon arrival (formerly referred to as “no-show”). When a cancellation fee is applicable, the original service authorization is revised using the Maximum Affordable Payment Schedule (MAPS) code for cancellation fees rather than the MAPS code for the Interpreter services. For more information about processing payments for cancellation upon arrival, refer to VRSM D-204-7: Cancellation Upon Arrival.

#### Creating a Service Record

VR staff must create a service record with the following MAPS codes for Interpreter services:

#### MAPS Codes for Interpreter and CART Services

* Contracted Interpreter Services – CAINTCR
* Non-Contracted Interpreter Services – CAINTNC
* Contracted Interpreter Services Cancellation Fee – INTCRCNL
* Non-Contracted Interpreter Services Cancellation Fee – INTNCCNL

#### Contracted Interpreter Services:

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Communication Access Services - Interpreters CONTRACT REQUIRED
* Level 3 Communication Access Services - HHSC Region ## - CONTRACT REQUIRED (choose appropriate region)
* Level 4 Communication Access Services - HHSC Region ## - (Choose certification level or noncertified)

#### Cancellation for Contracted Interpreter Services:

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Communication Access Services – Interpreters CONTRACT REQUIRED
* Level 3 Communication Access Services – HHSC Region ## - CONTRACT REQUIRED (choose appropriate region)
* Level 4 Cancellation Fee (Choose certification level or noncertified)

#### Travel-Related Services for Contracted Interpreter Services:

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Communication Access Services – Interpreters CONTRACT REQUIRED
* Level 3 Communication Access Services – Interpreters – Administration Fees, Travel Time, Lodging, Per Diem [CONTRACT REQUIRED]
* Level 4 Communication Access Services – Interpreters [CONTRACT REQUIRED] (Choose appropriate line item for administration fees, travel time; lodging, per diem separate line item for each)

#### Non-Contracted Interpreter Services:

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Communication Access Services – Interpreter – NON-CONTRACT ONLY
* Level 3 Communication Access Services - HHSC Region ## - NON-CONTRACT ONLY (choose appropriate region)
* Level 4 Communication Access Services - HHSC Region ## - (Choose certification level or noncertified)

#### Cancellation for Non-Contracted Interpreter Services:

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Communication Access Services – Interpreters NON-CONTRACT ONLY
* Level 3 Communication Access Services – HHSC Region ## - NON-CONTRACT ONLY (choose appropriate region)
* Level 4 Cancellation Fee (Choose certification level or noncertified)

#### Travel-Related Services for Non-Contracted Interpreter Services:

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Communication Access Services – Interpreters NON-CONTRACT ONLY
* Level 3 Communication Access Services – Interpreters – Administration Fees, Travel Time, Lodging, Per Diem [NON-CONTRACT ONLY]
* Level 4 Communication Access Services – Interpreters [NON-CONTRACT ONLY] (Choose appropriate line item for administration fees, travel time; lodging, per diem separate line item for each)

#### Contracted Interpreter Services for Colleges and Universities:

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Interpreter Services by Colleges and Universities (CONTRACT REQUIRED)
* Level 3 Interpreter Services by Colleges and Universities (CONTRACT REQUIRED))
* Level 4 Interpreter Services by Colleges and Universities—Contract (Enter rate specified by the contract.)

#### Non-Contracted Interpreter Services for Colleges and Universities:

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Interpreter Services by Colleges and Universities—Non-Contract (NO CONTRACT REQUIRED)
* Level 3 Interpreter Services by Colleges and Universities—Non-Contract
* Level 4 Interpreter Services by Colleges and Universities (Choose the first hour and certification level or noncertified)

For information about Pre-ETS Interpreter Services, refer to the Pre-ETS Desk Reference Part 2: Pre-ETS Purchasing Guidance and Menu of Services found on the Transition Services for Students and Youth with Disabilities Intranet page.

### C-305-9: Fee Schedule for Interpreter Services

Rates for Interpreter services are based on several factors. Rates for Interpreter services are shown in the [HHS CCSA Maximum Rates](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates). Below are the definitions to determine what rates apply:

#### Rate categories for Interpreter services:

* Day: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., weekdays (Monday through Friday)
* Evening: 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m., weekdays (Monday through Friday)
* Weekend: 5:00 p.m. Friday to 8:00 a.m. Monday
* Last-Minute: Service requests made less than 48 hours (two business days) in advance

#### Interpreter Certification Levels:

* Level A: BEI Level I\Ii, II\Iii, Basic, OC; B; NIC; RID CI, CT, IC, TC, NAD III
* Level B: BEI III\IIIi, Advanced, OC: C, OC: V; NIC Advanced; RID CSC, IC\TC, CI\CT, RSC, CDI, NAD IV
* Level C: BEI IV\IVi, V\Vi, Master; NIC Master; RID MCSC, SC: L, NAD V

When a session with an interpreter exceeds the original approved time, last-minute rates must be billed at the Additional Quarter Hour Rate for Interpreter Rates—Day.

## C-306: Translator Services

### C-306-1: Legal Authorization

The federal regulations in 34 CFR §361.51(c) require the designated state unit to ensure that providers of VR services can communicate—

"(1) In the native language of applicants and eligible individuals who have limited English proficiency; and

(2) By using appropriate modes of communication used by applicants and eligible individuals."

For TWC policy and procedures, see TWC Language Services Guide found on the TWC intranet page under Staff Resources.

All VR managers or their designee must:

* keep on file a list of translators that includes each translator's name, address, phone number, and language spoken; and
* update the list at least annually.

The VR manager contacts TWC Procurement and Contract Services about updates to ensure that the provider list, which is available to all staff, stays current.

The VR managers or their designee also includes the list in the Regional Communications Plan that TWC submits to the HHS Office for Civil Rights.

When using a translator, the VR staff member informs the translator and customer that information provided is kept in confidence.

For additional information, see VRSM A-300: Confidentiality and Use of Customer Records and Information.

### C-306-2: Guidelines for Translator Services

When the customer has limited English proficiency, VR staff makes every effort to locate a translator who:

* can effectively communicate in the customer's native language;
* is impartial;
* maintains the confidentiality of the customer's information; and
* is acceptable to the customer.

To find appropriate translators, VR staff asks for help from entities such as high schools, colleges, universities, the local chamber of commerce, churches, or private translation businesses that are located in areas where representatives of the customer's ethnic group can be found.

When it is not practical for the translator to meet in person with the VR staff and the customer, VR staff uses a speakerphone to communicate with the translator.

When VR sponsors a service, the VR staff ensures that the customer who has limited English proficiency is provided adequate help from:

* the service provider;
* an individual volunteer;
* a community organization; or
* other resources.

### C-306-3: Language Line

When a translator is not available, VR may use the Language Line telephone interpreter service.

To access the Language Line, refer to Language Services for VR Offices found on the Language Services Intranet page.

## C-307: Print and Braille Materials

VR also communicates with customers who are blind by using materials that are printed and materials that are braille.

Print can be accessible to customers who are blind or visually impaired by:

* supporting print and color contrast preferences for readability;
* educating staff about print and color preferences through VR teacher services;
* using large print (22-point font); and
* providing information on print preferences and color contrast.

Braille is a tactile communication system that uses a six-dot cell system.

TWC-VR:

* supports the use of braille;
* teaches braille through VR teacher services;
* uses braille materials;
* provides information about braille;
* refers customers to the Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired, for courses on the Nemeth code and braille; and
* provides counseling and guidance on literacy.

### C-307-1: Braille Training

Braille is an essential skill for customers who are blind.

The VR teacher and VR counselor must encourage any customer who cannot read print (including large print) efficiently and effectively to learn braille.

To help customers make an informed choice about whether to receive training in braille, the VR counselor offers customers the opportunity to receive a braille assessment using nonvisual techniques. Information on the components of a braille assessment can be found in Best Practices for Braille Training (Word) which is located on the VR Teachers Sharepoint page on the BVI Intranet page under Vocational Rehabilitation Teacher Services.

After the assessment, the VR counselor offers customers who would benefit an opportunity to learn braille.

For more information, refer to the Simply Braille presentation (PPTX) which is located on the VR Teachers Sharepoint page on the BVI Intranet page under Vocational Rehabilitation Teacher Services.

### C-307-2: Requesting Braille Services

Most TWS or VR field offices can create simple materials in braille. For small jobs, contact the nearest VR office. For large jobs, such as materials for a statewide conference, contact the Assistive Technology Unit (ATU) at [vr.atu@twc.texas.gov](mailto:vr.atu@twc.texas.gov).

## C-308: Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

For information, see [HHS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing) on the Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) website.

## C-309: Reader Services

Reader services include reading to a customer who is blind material that is otherwise unavailable to the customer. Reader services may also include assisting with research.

Reader services may be used for vocational or academic training.

The VR counselor explores the availability of other nonvisual media before purchasing reader services.

### C-309-1: Legal Authorization

34 CFR §361.48(b)

"Services for individuals who have applied for or been determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. As appropriate to the vocational rehabilitation needs of each individual and consistent with each individual's individualized plan for employment, the designated State unit must ensure that the following vocational rehabilitation services are available to assist the individual with a disability in preparing for, securing, retaining, advancing in or regaining an employment outcome that is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice:

(11) Reader services, rehabilitation teaching services, and orientation and mobility services for individuals who are blind."

### C-309-2: Reader Services for Students in an Academic Setting

#### Eligibility for Reader Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Customers who are blind or visually impaired are eligible for reader services if reader services are needed to support successful achievement of the customers' vocational goal.

Customer participation in the cost of services, also referred to as "BLR," does not apply to providing reader services.

#### Comparable Benefits

When a comparable benefit is available, it must be used instead of reader services. For example, an academic institution may provide reader services.

The customer must use reader services that are provided through a volunteer whenever possible, including services that are offered by certain public training programs or community service agencies.

For more information on Comparable Benefits, refer to VRSM D-203-3: Use of Comparable Services and Benefits. Also refer to Counselor Desk Reference Chapter C2: Blind and Visual Impairments.

#### Purchasing Reader Services

Reader services are purchased as follows:

* The VR counselor and customer agree on an hourly rate when planning for reader services in the individualized plan for employment (IPE). The rate must be documented in the IPE or in an IPE amendment and in the Form VR2011, Reader Services Log.
* The customer secures a reader to provide reader services. The VR counselor may provide guidance on this; however, it is the customer's responsibility to find and secure his or her own reader.
* VR staff issues a service authorization (SA) to the reader(s) before reader services are provided. The SA is based on the number of credit hours in which the customer is enrolled and needing reader services for that training period (semester, term, or class). VR staff will then issue an SA each month for the remainder of the training period. For more information, refer to VRSM D-213-1: Periodic Payments.
* The customer completes and submits Form VR2011 Reader Services Log to the VR counselor each month.
* Upon receipt of the Form VR2011 and a valid invoice, the VR counselor:
  + verifies that the Form VR2011 includes the number of hours, the agreed hourly rate, and the student's and reader's signatures;
  + verifies the invoice includes all of the required elements per VRSM D-208-2: Elements of an Invoice;
  + authorizes payment; and
  + places a copy of the Form VR2011 and invoice in the case folder.

Note: Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation (TWC-VR) does not pay for reader services rendered by a member of the customer's family or another VR customer.

#### Customer's Responsibilities

It is the customer's responsibility to:

* use all other reading-related resources to every extent possible before requesting reader services from TWC-VR;
* comply with TWC-VR policies that prohibit payment of reader services when rendered by an immediate family member or another VR customer; and
* submit the Form VR2011 Reader Services Log, and invoice to the VR counselor by the 15th day of the month that follows the service dates.

The customer has sole responsibility for:

* interviewing and hiring the reader at the agreed hourly rate;
* determining the scope of work, including the materials to be read and the date, time, duration, and location of the services;
* establishing and enforcing all terms and conditions of employment; and
* terminating the agreement, when necessary.

#### VR Counselor's Responsibilities

The VR counselor must:

* evaluate the number of hours of reader services that the customer needs;
* issue an SA in a timely manner;
* ensure that the customer understands that TWC-VR does not reimburse any self-paid payments for reader services;
* authorize payment; and
* ensure that a copy of the Form VR2011, Reader Services Log, and invoice is placed in the customer's case file.

Note: If reader services are not approved contracted services offered through the training program, or if comparable benefits are not available, the provider must be set up as a vendor in ReHabWorks (RHW) and paid directly.

Follow the process outlined in VRSM D-211: Setting Up and Paying Providers to set up an individual as an established provider in RHW.

### C-309-3: Contracted Reader Services

Reader services that are provided through a contract with the customer's training program offer the following benefits when the service is not available through a comparable benefit:

* Payment rates for reader services are already established and agreed upon.
* If the customer loses a reader at a crucial time during the semester, he or she is not burdened with finding a new reader; the university helps the customer find a new one.

Using a contract or designating a vendor for reader services does not infringe on a customer's independence because the customer is still directly involved in evaluating and documenting the services that are purchased.

## C-310: Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) describes the provision of translation of the spoken word displayed on-screen by a CART provider without contributing to the dialogue. Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) uses CART services to facilitate communication with customers during the rehabilitation process.

### C-310-1: Legal Authorization

When developing an individualized plan for employment (IPE), the designated state unit must provide all required information in the native language or mode of communication of the individual or the individual's representative. Refer to 34 CFR §361.45(c).

Appropriate modes of communication are defined in 34 CFR §361.5(4) as "specialized aids and supports that enable an individual with a disability to comprehend and respond to information that is being communicated. Appropriate modes of communication include, but are not limited to, the use of interpreters, open and closed-captioned videos, specialized telecommunications services and audio recordings, Braille and large-print materials, materials in electronic formats, augmentative communication devices, graphic presentations, and simple language materials."

### C-310-2: Maintaining Customer Confidentiality

VR staff must inform the CART provider and customer that information provided is maintained in confidence. For more information, refer to VRSM A-206: Confidentiality and Use of Customer Records and Information.

### C-310-3: Using CART Providers

TWC-VR must use qualified certified providers. A qualified CART provider holds any of the following certifications:

* Texas Court Reporters Association:
  + CART Certification Level I
  + CART Certification Level II
  + CART Certification Level III
  + CART Certification Level IV
  + CART Certification Level V
* National Court Reporter Association:
  + Certified Realtime Reporter (CRR)
  + A [Certified Realtime Captioner](https://www.ncra.org/certification/certified-realtime-captioner) (CRC) certificate of competency issued by the National Court Reporter Association
* Certified CART Provider (CCP)
* Certified Broadcast Captioner (CBC)

### C-310-4: Purchasing CART Services

Ordinarily, payment for CART services must not exceed the cost listed on the [Texas HHS Communication Services for State Agencies (CSSA) fee schedule.](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates) Using contracted CARTS providers is preferred.

Note: The use of non-contracted CART service providers must comply with VRSM D-205: Purchasing Threshold Requirements. Every effort must be made to deliver services at the regular (day) rates.

Note: A separate service category for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) interpreters and CART services must be used when purchasing CART services for Pre-ETS. For more information, refer to the Pre-ETS Desk Reference Part 2: Pre-ETS Purchasing Guidance and Menu of Services found on the Transition Services intranet page.

For specific CART services policies, refer to VR-SFP Chapter 24: Communication Access Services.

### C-310-5: Purchasing CART Services from Colleges and Universities

Fees in the [HHS CSSA fee schedule](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates) do not apply to contracted institutions unless noted in the terms of the contract. VR shares contracts with several colleges and universities to offset part of the cost for CART services, and rates are determined by the contract.

Payments made to colleges and universities that are not under a VR contract must comply with the established [HHS CSSA fee schedule](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates).

### C-310-6: Paying an Out-of-State Provider

When an out-of-state provider performs CART services:

* in Texas, established fees apply; or
* outside of Texas, the maximum allowable fee is the highest in-state fee for the applicable certification level.

### C-310-7: Procedures for Purchasing CART Services

The rate for CART services depends on:

* whether services are provided on-site or remotely;
* whether additional services are provided (for example, the use of a projector or providing an unedited transcript);
* the number of CART providers needed; and
* when the services are required (day, evening, weekend, or holiday).

VR purchases CART services as follows:

* The customer and VR counselor agree on the need for CART services.
* The customer selects the provider from among those available.
* VR staff contacts the CART provider to request services and indicates:
  + the date, time, and location;
  + whether services will be provided on-site or remotely;
  + whether transcripts and other services will be needed; and
  + how the provider's quoted fee compares to the maximum allowable fee, negotiating with the service provider when necessary.
* The service provider provides the name and certification level of the assigned captioner.
* VR staff records the service provider chosen in the customer's service record.
* VR staff obtains an agreement from the customer that the customer will attend the appointment and, if unavailable, will notify VR staff at least 48 hours before the appointment if he or she will not be able to attend, then VR staff documents the agreement in a case note in ReHabWorks (RHW).
* VR staff issues a service authorization for the approved services that contains the following information:
  + A line item for the administration fee using the specifications for the level of interpreting being requested
  + A line item for each hour using the number of hours as the quantity (no lump sum amounts) for each day of services being requested
  + The location for the service to be provided (on-site location or remotely)
  + A line item for reimbursement of travel costs for contracted providers only
* VR staff:
  + receives the provider's invoice;
  + collects any receipts for travel costs for contracted providers only; and
  + verifies the amount charged against the maximum allowable TWC fee as published on the [HHS CCSA website](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates).
* VR staff authorizes payment for the services in RHW.

TWC-VR pays cancellation fees to CART providers when services are cancelled within a period of less than 48 hours of the scheduled service, including cancellation upon arrival (formerly referred to as "no-show"). When a cancellation fee is applicable, the original service authorization is revised using the Maximum Affordable Payment Schedule (MAPS) code for cancellation fees rather than the MAPS code for CART services. For more information about processing payments for no-shows, refer to VRSM D-204-7: Cancellation Upon Arrival.

#### Creating a Service Record

VR staff must create a service record with the following MAPS Codes for CART services.

MAPS Codes for Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) Services

* Contracted CART Services – CACRTCR
* Contracted CART Services Cancellation Fee – CRTCRCNL
* Non-Contracted Interpreter Services – CACRTNC
* Non-Contracted CART Services Cancellation Fee – CRTNCCNL

#### Contracted CART Services

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Communication Access Services – CART -CONTRACT REQUIRED
* Level 3 Communication Access Services – CART – CONTRACT REQUIRED
* Level 4 Communication Access Services – CART – CONTRACT REQUIRED (Choose the appropriate option)

#### Cancellation for Contracted CART Services

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Communication Access Services – CART – CONTRACT REQUIRED
* Level 3 Communication Access Services – CART – CONTRACT REQUIRED
* Level 4 Cancellation Fee (choose appropriate option)

#### Travel-Related Services for Contracted CART Services

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Communication Access Services – CART – CONTRACT REQUIRED
* Level 3 Communication Access Services – CART – Administration Fees, Travel Time, Lodging, Per Diem [CONTRACT REQUIRED]
* Level 4 Communication Access Services – CART – [CONTRACT REQUIRED] (Choose appropriate line item for administration fees, travel time, lodging, per diem separate line item for each)

#### Non-Contracted CART Services

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Communication Access Services – CART – NON-CONTRACT ONLY
* Level 3 Communication Access Services – CART – NON-CONTRACT ONLY
* Level 4 Communication Access Services – CART – NON-CONTRACT ONLY

#### Cancellation for Non-Contracted CART Services

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Communication Access Services – CART – NON-CONTRACT ONLY
* Level 3 Communication Access Services – CART – NON-CONTRACT ONLY
* Level 4 Cancellation Fee (choose appropriate option)

#### Travel-Related Services for Non-Contracted CART Services

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Communication Access Services – CART – NON-CONTRACT ONLY
* Level 3 Communication Access Services – CART – Administration Fees, Travel Time, Lodging, Per Diem [NON-CONTRACT ONLY]
* Level 4 Communication Access Services – CART – [NON-CONTRACT ONLY] (Choose appropriate line item for administration fees, travel time, lodging, per diem separate line item for each)

#### Contracted Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART Services for Colleges and Universities

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Communication Access Services by Colleges and Universities (CONTRACT REQUIRED)
* Level 3 Communication Access Realtime Translation CART Services by Colleges and Universities – CONTRACT REQUIRED
* Level 4 CART Services by Colleges and Universities—Contracted (enter rate as specified by the contract)

#### Non-Contracted Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART Services for Colleges and Universities

* Level 1 Interpreter and Translator Services
* Level 2 Communication Access Services by Colleges and Universities—Non-Contracted Service Providers (NO CONTRACT REQUIRED)
* Level 3 Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) Services by Colleges and Universities (No Contract Required)
* Level 4 CART Services by Colleges and Universities (choose first hour/number of providers, location)

For Pre-ETS CART services, refer to the Pre-ETS Desk Reference Part 2: Pre-ETS Purchasing Guidance and Menu of Services found on the Transition Services Intranet page.

### C-310-8: Fee Schedule for CART Services

Rates for CART services are based on several factors. Rates for CART services are the [HHS CCSA Maximum Rates](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates). Below are the definitions to determine what rates apply:

* Day:  8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., weekdays (Monday through Friday)
* Evening:  5:00 p.m.to 8:00 a.m., weekdays (Monday through Friday)
* Weekend:  5:00 p.m. Friday to 8:00 a.m. Monday
* Last Minute:  Service requests made with less than 48 business hours in advance (2 business days) notice

When a scheduled session exceeds the original approved time, last-minute rates must be billed at the Additional Quarter Hour under CART Rates—Day.