# PART C, CHAPTER 17: AUXILIARY AIDS AND SERVICES

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| **Policy Number** | **Authority** | **Scope**  | **Effective Date** |
| Part C, Chapter 17 | [Americans with Disabilities Act](https://www.eeoc.gov/statutes/ada-amendments-act-2008), 34 CFR [§361.48(b)(10)](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing#p-361.48(b)(10)), [§361.51(c)](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates#p-361.51(c)), [§361.48(b)(11)](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates#p-361.48(b)(11)), TWC Rule [§856.55](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=20&ch=856&rl=55), [§856.48](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=20&ch=856&rl=48), and Auxiliary Aids and Services 28 CFR [§35.104](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-28/part-35#p-35.104(Auxiliary%20aids%20and%20services)) | All TWC-VR staff | 9/3/2024 |

## PURPOSE

In accordance with the authority (Federal and State) listed above, this policy is issued by the Texas Workforce Commission Vocational Rehabilitation Division (TWC-VR). Adherence to these rules and regulations issued under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), supports Texans with disabilities in gaining, maintaining, and advancing in competitive integrated employment (CIE).

Specifically, the purpose of this policy and these procedures is to ensure adherence to providing auxiliary aids and services to individuals with disabilities necessary to participate in the VR program.

## DEFINITIONS

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): The ADA prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications, and access to State and local government programs and services.

Auxiliary Aids and Services: Items, equipment, or services that assist in effective communication between a person who has a hearing, vision, or speech disability and a person who does not for purposes of enabling the individual with a sensory disability to access and participate in a service.

Informed Choice: The means by which a customer chooses their rehabilitation path, from options based on their needs and circumstances and the TWC-VR rules, as it relates to access and choosing auxiliary aids and services, and the providers of those services.

## POLICY

### General Overview

Auxiliary aids and services encompass a broad range of tools, accommodations, and support mechanisms designed to ensure equal access and participation for individuals with sensory disabilities in various settings. These aids and services are mandated by laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, aiming to remove barriers to communication, interaction, and participation faced by individuals with sensory disabilities.

Examples of auxiliary aids and services include the following:

* Assistive listening devices;
* Sign language interpreters;
* Braille materials;
* Captioning services;
* Tactile graphics and materials;
* Screen reading software;
* Alternative formats for printed materials (e.g., large print, audio recordings); and
* Communication devices for individuals with speech impairments.

These aids and services are tailored to meet the specific needs of individuals with disabilities, facilitating their full participation in education, employment, public services, and other aspects of daily life. By ensuring equal access to information, communication, and facilities, auxiliary aids and services promote inclusivity, independence, and equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities.

### Standards for Providers (SFP)

The SFP manual focuses on the business practices, processes, and policies that TWC-VR and the contracted provider must follow. This VRSM chapter includes services that are provided by a contractor. For additional information regarding contractor responsibilities, service descriptions and costs, please refer to the SFP Chapter 24: Communication Access Services.

### Additional Policy Considerations

* Comparable Services and Benefits: Auxiliary aids and services are exempt from the requirement to secure comparable services and benefits prior to TWC-VR expending funds.
* Customer Participation in the Cost of Services: Auxiliary aids and services are exempt from applying Basic Living Requirements (BLR) and, therefore, the customer is not required to participate in the cost of services.
* Recipients of Social Security Disability Benefits: Recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), due to the customer’s disability, are exempt from the requirement to participate in the cost of TWC-VR services regardless of income.
* Exceptions to Policy: When necessary to meet the VR needs of a customer, TWC-VR staff members may request exceptions to policies and procedures through their chain of management up to the Deputy Division Director of Field Services Delivery, or designee. However, exceptions to policies and procedures based on Federal and State laws, statutes, and rules or regulations are not allowable.

## PROCEDURES

### Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program

The Department of [Health and Human Services Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/part-361) 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/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates)

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.

There are three ways to obtain a STAP application:

1. Contact DHHS directly;
2. Contact the STAP Specialist for the relevant DHHS region ([regional list of local service providers);](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac%24ext.TacPage) or
3. Visit the [DHHS Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program (STAP)](https://www.ncra.org/certification/certified-realtime-captioner) web page.

When submitting the application, customers should include a copy of a document serving as valid proof of their 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 must verify 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 the list of registered vendors from the list referred to below.

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 should contact DHHS by—

* Phone at (512) 407-3250 (voice) or (512) 407-3251 (TTY); or
* Email at [stap@hhsc.state.tx.us](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing/specialized-telecommunications-assistance-program-stap).

### 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-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 or protactile interpretation for customers who are DeafBlind.

Using Certified Interpreters: TWC-VR must use certified interpreters whenever possible. The Board for Evaluation of Interpreter (BEI) Registry, Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), or National Association of the Deaf (NAD) must be used to find a certified interpreter. The registry might include certified interpreters that do not have a contract with TWC-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 Spoken (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) or other States' BEI registries:
	+ 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
	+ Level 1 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 TWC-VR staff member who is fluent in sign language may facilitate communication by meeting in the TWC-VR office or in a similar setting with TWC-VR staff and the customer or other individuals who are deaf. While a valid credential is preferred, TWC-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.

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.

Using 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, TWC-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. With TWC-VR staff assistance, as needed, the customer must complete an *Acknowledgement for Noncertified Communication Access Provider form (VR3104)*. The *VR3104* must be completed indicating the name of the noncertified interpreter or the college or university on the form. The signed and dated *VR3104* is filed in the customer's case file and documented in RHW.

The customer may revoke, in writing, the written consent any time after signing the *VR3104*.

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

* Medical;
* Legal; or
* Psychiatric.

Out-of-State Interpreters: If an out-of-state interpreter is not listed on the BEI Registry in Texas, the RID, or NAD, the provider will be treated as noncertified and must follow the applicable procedures unless the out-of-state provider provides proof of a valid BEI certification or other acceptable certification. If proof of certification is validated, the out-of-state provider will be considered a certified interpreter.

Purchasing Interpreter Services**:** Payment for interpreter services must not exceed the cost listed on the [Texas HHS Communication Services for State Agencies (CSSA) Maximum Rates](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing/specialized-telecommunications-assistance-program-stap). Contracted interpreters must be used when they are available. Only when a contracted interpreter is not available may a non-contracted interpreter be used.

Purchasing Interpreter Services from Colleges and Universities: Interpreter services may be purchased from colleges and universities that are contracted with TWC-VR or by those that are not contracted. Purchases made to colleges and universities that are contracted with TWC-VR must comply with the established rate in the contract. Contracted rates can be found in the Contract Comments section in RHW once you select the appropriate vendor. Purchases made from colleges and universities that are not contracted with TWC-VR must comply with the established rate in the [HHS CSSA Maximum Rates](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates).

For each class, customers must choose to use interpreter services or a CART service. TWC will not purchase both services for the same customer for the same class.

Purchasing Interpreter Services from an Out-of-State Provider: When an out-of-state provider performs interpreter services—

* In Texas, the established fees apply whether certified or noncertified and dependent upon whether proper certification is established; or
* Outside of Texas, the maximum allowable fee is the highest in-state fee for the applicable certification level.

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://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac%24ext.TacPage).

TWC-VR purchases interpreter services according to the following procedures:

* 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://dhhs.hhsc.state.tx.us/providers/contractors.asp)); and
	+ The customer's preferred provider, if appropriate.
* The customer selects the provider from among those available.
* TWC-VR staff contact the contracted interpreter service provider or the non-contracted interpreter service provider to request services and indicates—
	+ The certification level needed; and
	+ The date, time, and location.
* The service provider provides the name and certification level of the assigned interpreter.
* TWC-VR staff inform the customer about the assigned interpreter.
* TWC-VR staff obtain agreement from the customer that the customer will attend the appointment. The customer agrees to notify TWC-VR staff at least 48 hours before the appointment if they will not be able to attend the appointment. TWC-VR staff documents the agreement in a case note in RHW.
* TWC-VR staff issue a service authorization (SA) 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; and
	+ A line item for reimbursement of travel costs (for contracted providers only).
* TWC-VR staff—
	+ Receive the provider's invoice;
	+ Retain receipts for travel costs (for contracted providers only); and
	+ Verify the amount charged against the maximum allowable fee in the [HHS CSSA Maximum Rates](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates).
	+ TWC-VR staff authorizes payment for the services in RHW.

TWC-VR pays cancellation fees to interpreters when services are canceled less than 48 hours before the time of the scheduled service, including cancellation upon arrival.

When a cancellation fee is applicable, the original SA is revised using the Maximum Affordable Payment Schedule (MAPS) code for cancellation fees rather than the MAPS code for the Interpreter services.

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.

### 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. TWC-VR uses CART services to facilitate communication with customers during the rehabilitation process.

Using CART Providers: TWC-VR must use qualified providers as defined below. 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://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates) (CRC) certificate of competency issued by the National Court Reporter Association
* Certified CART Provider (CCP)
	+ Certified Broadcast Captioner (CBC)

When a certified CART provider is not available, a noncertified provider may be used except in Medical, Legal, or Psychiatric settings. A noncertified provider must meet the criteria to take and pass the Texas certification exam and must type a minimum of 225 words per minute. If a noncertified CART provider is available, documentation of the provider's qualifications must be submitted to the Program Specialist for Deaf and Hard of Hearing for review and agreement for the noncertified provider to provide the service.

A noncertified CART provider may be used with the customer’s written consent. The customer must complete a VR3104, which must indicate the name of the noncertified CART provider or the college or university on the form. The complete *VR3104* is filed in the customer’s case file and documented in RHW. The customer may revoke, in writing, the written consent at any time after signing the *VR3104*.

Purchasing CART Services: Payment for CART services must not exceed the cost listed on the [HHS CSSA Maximum Rates](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing/how-select-right-sign-language-interpreter). Using contracted CART providers is preferred. Noncertified CART providers approved by TWC-VR and the customer will be paid at 70% of the published rates.

Purchasing CART Services from Colleges and Universities: Fees in the [HHS CSSA Maximum Rates](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. TWC-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 contracted with TWC-VR must comply with the established rate in the [HHS CSSA Maximum Rates](https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/contracting-hhs/communication-services-state-agencies/cssa-maximum-rates). For each class, customers must choose an interpreter service or CART service. TWC will not purchase both services for the same customer for the same class.

Purchasing CART Services from 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.

Procedures for Purchasing CART Services: The rate for CART services depends on the following:

* Whether services are provided on-site or remotely;
* Whether additional services are provided (e.g., 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).

TWC-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.
* TWC-VR staff contacts the CART provider to request services and indicates—
	+ Date, time, and location;
	+ Whether services will be provided on-site or remotely; and
	+ Whether transcripts and other services will be needed.
* The service provider provides the name and certification level of the assigned captioner.
* TWC-VR staff record the service provider chosen in the customer's service record.
* TWC-VR staff obtain an agreement from the customer that the customer will attend the appointment and, if unavailable, will notify TWC-VR staff at least 48 hours before the appointment if they will not be able to attend; TWC-VR staff the document the agreement in a case note in RHW. If a noncertified provider is being used, the completed *VR3104* must be filed in the customer’s file and a case note entered into RHW.
* TWC-VR staff issues an SA 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); and
	+ A line item for reimbursement of travel costs for contracted providers only.
* TWC-VR staff must—
	+ Receive the provider's invoice;
	+ Collect any receipts for travel costs for contracted providers only; and
	+ Verify the amount charged against the maximum allowable TWC fee as published on the [HHS CCSA Maximum Rates](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/part-361).
* TWC-VR staff authorize payment for the service in RHW.

TWC-VR pays cancellation fees to CART providers when services are canceled 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 SA is revised using the MAPS code for cancellation fees rather than the MAPS code for CART services.

### 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.

Rates for noncertified CART provider is 70% of the published CART services rated on the HHS CCSA Maximum Rates.

### Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

For additional information, see [HHS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/part-361) on the Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) website.

### Translator Services

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 must contact TWC Procurement and Contract Services about updates to ensure that the provider list, which is available to all TWC-VR staff, stays current.

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

When using a translator, TWC-VR staff inform the translator and customer that information provided is kept in confidence.

Guidelines for Translator Services: When the customer has limited English proficiency, TWC-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, TWC-VR staff must ask 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 TWC-VR staff and the customer, TWC-VR staff uses a speakerphone to communicate with the translator.

When TWC-VR purchases a service, the TWC-VR staff must ensure 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.

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

To access the Language Line, refer to Language Services for TWC-VR Offices.

### Print and Braille Materials

TWC-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 must—

* Support the use of braille;
* Teaches braille through VR Teacher services;
* Use braille materials;
* Provide information about braille;
* Refer customers to the Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired, for courses on the Nemeth code and braille; and
* Provide counseling and guidance on literacy.

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 document.

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

Requesting Braille Services: Most TWC-VR offices can create simple materials in braille. For small jobs, contact the nearest TWC-VR office. For large jobs, such as materials for a statewide conference, contact the Assistive Technology Unit (ATU) at vr.atu@twc.texas.gov.

### 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 must explore the availability of other nonvisual media before purchasing reader services.

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.
* 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 IPE. The rate must be documented in the IPE or in an IPE amendment and in the *Reader Services Log (VR2011)*.
	+ 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.
	+ TWC-VR staff issue an 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 need reader services for that training period (semester, term, or class). TWC-VR staff will then issue an SA each month for the remainder of the training period.
	+ The customer completes and submits *VR2011* to the VR Counselor each month.
	+ Upon receipt of *VR2011* and a valid invoice, the VR Counselor must—
		- Verify that *VR2011* includes the number of hours, the agreed hourly rate, and the student's and reader's signatures;
		- Verify the invoice includes all of the required elements;
		- Authorize payment; and
		- Place a copy of *VR2011* and invoice in the case folder.

WC-VR does not pay for reader services rendered by a member of the customer's family or another TWC-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 purchasing of reader services when rendered by an immediate family member or another VR customer; and
* Submit *VR2011* 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 *VR2011* and invoice is placed in the customer's case file.

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 RHW and paid directly.

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; and
* If the customer loses a reader at a crucial time during the semester, they are 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.

## APPROVALS & CONSULTATIONS

TWC-VR staff must follow the following approvals and consultations:

* *VR Manager approval is required when TWC-VR staff members who are fluent in sign language and hold a valid credential provide interpreting services to communicate with a TWC-VR customer outside of the office, except as a last resort.*

## REVIEW

The Policy Planning and Statewide Initiatives Team, or designee, is responsible for reviewing this policy and these procedures and will update the Document History log if necessary.

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| **Date** | **Type** | **Change Description** |
| 9/3/2024 | New | VRSM Policy and Procedure Rewrite |