

Introduction

This chapter contains specific information on each of the services which may be provided for NYSCB participants. The services described in this chapter may be provided in accordance with an approved IPE, as appropriate to the needs of the individual consistent with the individual's informed choice, federal regulations and NYSCB policy and procedures.

Any services not described in the VR manual should be discussed with the VR counselor's supervisor to determine whether it can be included on the IPE.

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Introduction

Vocational counseling and guidance is provided by the VR counselor to

1. promote a successful participant/counselor partnership throughout the rehabilitation process, and
2. engage the participant in a decision-making process in the selection, planning and achievement of an employment outcome where the participant is responsible for, and makes, decisions about the plan and services leading to employment.

When to Provide

Vocational counseling and guidance is provided throughout the participant's entire rehabilitation program. Vocational counseling and guidance is provided by VR counselors and is not purchased from other sources. Other community members (e.g., services providers, family, friends) can play a crucial role in the effectiveness of vocational counseling and guidance by supporting the participant's achievement of their vocational goal.

Scope of Service

Vocational counseling and guidance is provided to

1. encourage the participant by establishing a relationship of mutual respect, where the VR counselor can be supportive in promoting the participant's development of the skills needed to achieve an employment outcome;
2. facilitate informed choice throughout the VR process by providing information about the scope and limits of VR services, and by helping the participant obtain information on programs, resources and services that can assist in achieving their vocational goal. When there are limits on the availability of VR services, the VR counselor can assist the participant in exploring alternatives;
3. gain a comprehensive and individualized understanding of the participant's abilities, capabilities, interests, strengths, resources, priorities and concerns to identify factors that will be critical to vocational achievement;
4. facilitate the participant's understanding of their strengths and plan with the participant to find ways to work around any impediments, such as functional

limitations related to health, personal, economic (e.g., benefits, work disincentives/incentives) and social issues;

5. assist the participant in selecting a vocational goal and developing a plan of services toward that goal;
6. advise the participant regarding the benefits of involving significant others such as family members, relatives and friends in the community who can be assets to the VR process; and
7. provide ongoing support for the stabilization of competitive integrated employment, including advising the participant about the benefits of using natural supports.

Other Counseling Services

If based on the VR counselor's observations, assessments or training reports, the VR counselor believes that a participant can benefit from psychological or other counseling, they should strongly recommend that the participant seek these counseling services. If the participant agrees to participate in counseling services, the VR counselor should arrange for the service and revise the IPE as needed. If the participant refuses counseling, the VR counselor should advise the participant that failure to address issues may impact the participant's ability to participate successfully in their VR program and should document the conversation in the case record.

Purpose of Low Vision Services

Low vision services are provided to legally blind individuals to help maximize the use of their residual vision. Low vision services are designed to increase the participant's independence in daily living activities such as self-care; mobility in the home and community; and reading.

Low Vision Services as Medical Restoration

Low vision services are considered medical restoration services. These services are only provided by NYSCB when necessary for the achievement of the vocational goal. Low vision services are frequently medically necessary to increase a person's visual functioning and the ability to perform daily living activities.

What are Low Vision Services

Low vision services include one initial examination and three follow up examinations within a 2-year period. Low vision services may also include training on the use of devices for daily living activities.

Initial Examination

The initial low vision examination is expected to include but not be limited to the following:

1. Case history (including use of large print, braille, special aids; occupation before and after visual impairment; current goals; mobility)
2. Exterior eye examination
3. Internal eye examination
4. Visual acuity (includes lighting analysis)
5. Objective tests
6. Subjective tests (includes refraction)
7. Tests of eye coordination and muscle function
8. Visual field tests
9. Color vision tests
10. Glaucoma tests
11. Pre-confirmation of all subjective tests
12. Prescription of specific low vision aids

Follow-up Examinations

The follow-up examination will be used to

1. assess the functional use of prescribed aids,
2. instruct the participant in the use of prescribed aids, when necessary, and
3. address significant changes in vision.

VR counselors should not routinely authorize follow-up examinations. Follow-up examinations are authorized in response to specific needs of the participant identified at the initial low vision examination. An authorization of a follow-up examination should not occur for simple fitting or adjustment of the low vision aids.

Low Vision Service Providers

Low vision services may be provided by all licensed ophthalmologists and those optometrists who have been certified as low vision specialists by the New York Optometric Association.

Training in the use of low vision aids for activities of daily living may also be provided by vision rehabilitation therapists and orientation and mobility specialists; or by licensed health care providers, such as occupational therapists, when prescribed by a qualified physician.

When Are Low Vision Services Provided?

Low vision initial and follow-up examinations may be provided to NYSCB participants at any time during the rehabilitation process. Low vision aids may be provided only in Status 06 and above.

VR counselors will not routinely re-open closed cases to provide low vision services when there is no evidence of significant or substantial limitations in the participant's ability to function in their job. **A documented change in vision is not a sole indicator for re-opening a case and providing low vision services.**

Post-Employment Services

Low vision services can only be provided during post-employment services when the services are necessary for the participant to maintain their employment.

VR services are not to be used for routine low vision services. Once a participant has achieved their vocational goal and exits the VR program, they are responsible for routine low vision services.

Replacing Low Vision Aids

Low vision aids will only be replaced once when the devices are damaged through occurrences beyond the control of the participant or when lost.

After exiting the VR program, participants are responsible for replacing their lost or damaged low vision aids.

Substantial Changes and Low Vision Services

Upon receipt of a request for low vision services from an individual whose case is closed, NYSCB staff will conduct a telephone interview to determine if the request is for routine medical care or for additional low vision services due to substantial changes in the individual's ability to function in their job. Substantial changes would mean that the individual can no longer perform tasks that are essential requirements of the job.

If the individual's need for low vision services is determined to be for routine medical eye care and no additional VR services are required, the individual would not be eligible. If there are substantial changes in the individual's ability to function in the occupation and VR services are required, then the individual can be considered eligible.

What Are Low Vision Aids

A low vision aid is any lens, corrective device or other instrument prescribed by a low vision specialist which improves visual functioning. Examples of low vision aids:

1. Hand magnifiers
2. Stand magnifiers
3. Telescopic devices (hand-held or spectacle mounted)
4. Tele-microscopic devices
5. Portable electronic magnification devices

Conventional eyeglasses are not low vision aids. Low vision aids are prescribed when conventional eyeglasses cannot correct vision to a normal range due to a permanent eye disease or impairment.

CCTV's

The purchase of a CCTV can only occur with a recommendation from a low vision specialist. When recommending a CCTV, the low vision specialist should be as specific as possible in describing any features required by the participant. Though CCTV's are considered high tech equipment they do not require economic eligibility. Follow the *High-Tech Purchasing Guidelines* when purchasing a CCTV or a portable electronic magnification device.

Economic Need

The initial low vision evaluation, all follow-up examinations and low vision aids are not contingent on economic need. See Chapter 5.00, Determination of Economic Need, for additional information.

Comparable Benefits

Available comparable benefits must be used prior to authorizing low vision services. Any applicable Medicaid, Medicare and private medical insurance benefits should be billed by the provider as comparable benefits and should be used before NYSCB authorizes low vision services. Low vision providers should clarify to the insurance carriers that the low vision exams and devices are medically necessary services that increase the visual functioning of an individual whose vision cannot be corrected by surgical means or by conventional eyeglasses.

All authorizations for low vision services must include the statement "**Less any third-party insurance reimbursement**". If providers are reimbursed after NYSCB has paid for a service, the provider is obligated to reimburse NYSCB for any excess payment.

See Chapter 11.00, Comparable Services and Benefits, for additional information.

Referral for Low Vision Services

When referring a participant for low vision services, the VR counselor will provide the low vision specialist with:

1. a copy of the participant's most recent ophthalmological examination, if available
2. a Low Vision Evaluation Report Form (for agency providers this form automatically populates into the case record when the authorization is approved); and
3. an authorization for an initial low vision exam.

The Low Vision Evaluation Report

The Low Vision Evaluation Report is used by the VR counselor to describe proposed participant activities and the vocational goal, if known. The VR counselor can also discuss any specific concerns. The Low Vision Specialist uses the Low Vision Evaluation Report to report findings to the VR counselor and to prescribe low vision aids for the participant.

The Low Vision Evaluation Report must be completed by the low vision specialist for all participants referred for services.

Reviewing Low Vision Recommendations

Before authorizing devices, VR counselors should review the Low Vision Evaluation recommendations. The NYSCB Low Vision Consultant can be contacted if the VR counselor has any questions about the devices being prescribed.

Guidelines for Deciding What Devices to Purchase

Based on the low vision specialists' recommendations the VR counselor, can determine which devices are necessary for the participant to achieve their vocational goal using the following guidelines:

1. For more complex LV devices, consider if the participant has the motivation and the ability to learn to use a device properly. Discussion with the participant and the direct service provider (e.g., Vision Rehabilitation Therapist, O&M instructor or Occupational Therapist) will help to assess these factors. While a device may improve acuity and the ability to perform a specific task during an examination, will the participant be willing and able to learn to use the device independently and sustain use over time? Careful consideration of these factors must support the decision to purchase.
2. Whenever the VR counselor has doubts about how effective a device may be, the possibility of a trial loaner along with rehabilitation teaching (or O&M instruction depending on the purpose of the device) should be explored. For custom devices, this is not always feasible.
3. In some circumstances, by looking carefully at the functional gain the participant wants to achieve, adaptive equipment, adaptive skills training or non-optical devices can be more effective than some low vision aids. If this seems possible, ask the low vision practitioner if these alternatives are appropriate.

Payment for Aids on the Low Vision Aid Fee Schedule

Any aids prescribed by the low vision specialist which are on the Low Vision Aid Fee Schedule and not more than the approved fee, may be ordered by the VR counselor.

Low Vision Aid Special Request Procedure

If the low vision provider is unable to find an appropriate substitute on the existing fee schedule, the VR counselor will need to request approval for an exception.

This procedure is for optical devices only. Non-optical aids and lamps, if not on the Low Vision Aid Fee Schedule, should be purchased as rehabilitation equipment.

Special Request Prior Approval Process

Any prescribed items that are not on the fee schedule require special request prior approval and a higher level of documentation. The Special Request Prior Approval form (or a supplemental narrative) and the Low Vision Evaluation Report Form must

1. provide a description of the low vision aid,
2. explain the purpose of the low vision aid and provide justification of its necessity,
3. provide information about the need for training with the prescribed low vision aid, and
4. provide a price quote from a verifiable source (e.g., wholesale supplier) that clearly indicates the actual cost of the item.

Steps to Follow for Approval

1. The low vision practitioner will submit the Low Vision Evaluation Report form and the Special Request Prior Approval form to the VR counselor.
2. The VR counselor will review the information and send it to the senior counselor or the district manager for further review and approval.
3. Once approved by the senior counselor or district manager the request and documentation should be sent to the home office for final approval.
4. The VR counselor will be notified of the decision in a memo which includes a description and the approved fee. This notification will be sent to the VR counselor. **A copy of this memo must be attached to the authorization when submitted to OCFS Accounts Payable.** If the request is denied, the VR counselor will be notified with the reason for the denial.

LOW VISION SERVICES

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Ordering Aids

Prescribed aids are ordered directly from the low vision specialist unless another source is specified on the Low Vision Evaluation Report Form.

SOCIAL CASEWORK

9.03.01

Social Casework services are intended to enable the participant to utilize resources that will assist in the areas of adjustment to vision loss; finance; health; self-advocacy and participation in activities with family, peers, community and work. Participants receiving this service should exit with the demonstrated ability to manage all areas of need addressed during the baseline evaluation.

Social Casework may address needs in any of the following areas, entitlements/benefits and resources to manage financial obligations (SNAP, SSI, etc.), understanding and compliance with prescribed medications/treatment, identification, establishment and maintenance of social supports with appropriate interpersonal skills and boundaries, self-advocacy, coping mechanisms for dealing with vision loss and concurrent disabilities and identification of barriers that affect work readiness including social, economic, behavioral, medical, physical, psychiatric and transportation.

See the Comprehensive Services Contract (CSC) Guidelines for additional information about the provision of Social Casework services.

Social Casework Level 2 Services– Brief Therapeutic Intervention

Social Casework Level 2 may be recommended at any time in the VR process when the VR counselor and the participant agree that an immediate, short-term therapeutic intervention is necessary to address behaviors or conditions that are significantly impeding the participant's progress toward an educational or vocational goal. This intervention may address mental, social, emotional, behavioral, developmental, and addictive disorders, conditions and disabilities.

Social Casework Level 2 may be authorized when it is expected that the participant's needs can be addressed within 6-12 hours over a period of no longer than 12 weeks.

In all cases, social casework services provided must be explicitly related to the resolution of issues that are interfering with the participant's achievement of personally defined education and/or employment goals mutually agreed upon between the VR counselor and the participant. If the need for long term personal counseling or psychotherapy is identified, the contractor should assist in the transition to these services.

See the Comprehensive Services Contract (CSC) Guidelines for additional information about Social Casework Level 2.

Determining the Scope of Social Casework Services

The scope of social casework services provided is determined based on an evaluation of the participant's needs relative to their vocational goal. The VR counselor will be provided a written report of the evaluation findings including recommendations. The VR counselor will discuss the evaluation findings and recommendations with the participant to determine what, if any, services are to be provided to meet their vocational needs.

Who Provides Social Casework

Social Casework is provided by professionals who meet the qualifications established by NYSCB. They may be provided through a private agency, or by an approved private vendor.

Priority of Service Provider

When choosing a services provider, the following priority order should be used:

1. Private agency personnel, when available
2. An independent social worker who is approved by NYSCB as a private vendor

Private vendors are to be used when priority 1 is not available.

Economic Need

The provision of Social Casework is not contingent on economic need. See Chapter 5.00, Determination of Economic Need, for additional information.

Comparable Benefits

Available comparable benefits must be used prior to authorizing social casework services. See Chapter 11.00, Comparable Services and Benefits, for additional information.

Introduction

Assistive technology is a service that assists individuals with disabilities in overcoming barriers that hinder full participation in education, rehabilitation, employment, transportation, independent living, and recreation. NYSCB will only support assistive technology when it is necessary to achieve the participant's vocational objectives and goals.

The need for assistive technology can be considered at any stage of the VR process. If needed to determine eligibility for VR services, assistive technology must be considered, and will be provided if necessary, to assess and develop a participant's capacity to perform in a work environment. Assistive technology must also be considered when planning the IPE and choosing a vocational goal.

Assistive Technology Services

Assistive technology services are services that directly assist an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device, including

1. evaluation of the needs of an individual with a disability;
2. purchasing, leasing or otherwise providing assistive technology devices;
3. selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining; repairing, or replacing assistive technology devices;
4. coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices;
5. training or technical assistance for an individual with a disability (or others, as appropriate, e.g., family members); and
6. training or technical assistance for professionals, employers, or others as necessary to the achievement of an employment outcome by an individual with a disability.

Assistive Technology Service Providers

NYSCB provides assistive technology services through a network of assistive technology centers and through private vendor high-tech consultants. All technology services must be provided in accordance with the *Assistive Technology Services Guidelines*

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

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Assistive Technology Centers (ATCs)

ATCs have been established by NYSCB across the state. Referrals to ATCs should be based on the participant's residence, the location of their work or education site, travel proximity, and/or availability of technology staff.

Use of High-Tech Consultants

It is the policy of NYSCB to utilize contracted ATCs to meet the service needs of participants whenever possible. When services are not feasible or available through the ATCs counselors have the option to utilize private vendor High Tech Consultants.

Private vendor High Tech Consultants will use the same reporting format and perform to the same standards as the ATCs. (See the *Assistive Technology Services Guidelines*.)

Approval, High-Tech Consultants

Private vendor High Tech Consultants must be approved by NYSCB. See Chapter 16.00, Private Vendors, for additional information.

ATC Contracted Services

Outcome services listed below are provided by contracted ATCs. Brief descriptions of the services are included below. For more detailed information see the *Assistive Technology Services Guidelines*.

1. ATC Readiness Evaluation (required service that precedes Assessment and Training)
2. ATC Assessment (including an equipment recommendation)
3. ATC Training

ATC Fee-Based Services

Fee-based services listed below may be provided by ATC's or private vendor high-tech consultants. Brief descriptions of the services are included below. For more detailed information, see the *Assistive Technology Services Guidelines*.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

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1. ATC On-Site Evaluation
2. ATC On-Site Installation
3. ATC Technical Job Coach Development
4. ATC On-The-Job Technical Support
5. ATC Technical Support for Placement Staff
6. ATC Refresher Training
7. ATC Remote Technical Assistance
8. ATC Training Hourly

Fee-Based Services Provided Through the Comprehensive Services Contract (CSC)

Fee based services listed below are provided through the CSC providers. Brief descriptions of the services are included below. For more detailed information, see the *CSC Guidelines*.

1. Computer Software Training
2. Strategic Technical Intervention

Preparing a Participant for Referral for Assistive Technology Services

Prior to making a referral for assistive technology services, the VR counselor must do the following:

1. Discuss with the participant their need for accommodations for academic/vocational training or placement purposes
2. Determine whether the participant has the basic skills necessary to participate in assessment or training
3. Inform the participant about what to expect from the service, and provide the "Assistive Technology Services - Information for Participants" handout
4. Discuss with the participant the equipment procurement process and ownership policies

Initial Referral Information

A referral for ATC services should include the following:

1. Completed NYSCB Vendor Referral

2. Most recent Confidential Health Assessment
3. Most recent ophthalmology report, if available
4. Most recent low vision evaluation report with CCTV recommendation if applicable
5. Results of audiological exam, if applicable
6. Any reports of previous technology services
7. Job or educational task analysis and productivity requirements
8. Reports of other assessments: vocational assessment, communication skills evaluations, etc.
9. Information regarding any other equipment being purchased

ATC Assessment and Equipment Recommendation

An assessment provides information about a participant's existing computer skills and knowledge, as well as their ability to learn to use assistive technological devices. The information gathered is used by the VR counselor, ATC staff person, and the participant to determine the next appropriate step in achieving the participant's vocational goal. Final recommendations on the assessment report will include: a recommendation for assistive equipment and a prediction of the likelihood that the participant will benefit from assistive technology training.

Purchase of Recommended Equipment

Equipment recommendations with justification for purchase will be listed on the E-plan. NYSCB will review the E-plan to finalize the equipment purchase. NYSCB may

1. make substitutions similar in function which may be more cost-effective than the original recommendation,
2. delete specific items,
3. delay purchase of any/all items, or
4. choose not to purchase any of the equipment.

Procedures for purchasing equipment are in the High-Tech Purchasing Guidelines.

ATC Training

ATC training familiarizes a participant with the assistive equipment configuration specifically recommended for them, including routine maintenance and care, features, functions, system operation, and configuration assembly/disassembly. At the end of training, a participant will be expected to demonstrate, to the levels required in the *Assistive Technology Services Guidelines*, proficiency in the function and use of

the recommended assistive equipment configuration and software.

On-Site Evaluation

An on-site evaluation should result in recommendations which encompass all ranges of technology. The on-site evaluation report should also include a prediction of the likelihood of a successful installation of the equipment at the site and identify a technical liaison. Whenever possible, the employer should provide technical support to the NYSCB participant.

The VR counselor should be available at the site during the on-site evaluation.

On-Site Installation

On-site installation is intended to verify that the participant's specific assistive equipment is installed in the job/education setting in a manner in which the configuration interacts effectively in the environment, enabling the participant to effectively perform the tasks required. It may include actual installation, assistance installing the configuration, and technical assistance provided over the phone.

At the completion of this service, the equipment configuration must function as designed for a consecutive two-week period. This is verified with the on-site technical liaison (if established) and the participant. This service is purely technical and equipment specific and does not pertain to a participant's ability to use the equipment appropriately.

On-site installations are reserved for more complicated equipment set-ups. Participants will be expected to be able to set up stand-alone equipment by themselves.

Exceptions may be made at the counselor's discretion.

Technical Job Coach Development

Placement efforts can be further enhanced through the development of technical skills in job coaches. Upon referral from NYSCB, a provider will train job coaches to provide them with specific skills in the application of assistive devices for the blind at job or educational sites. As the result of this training, the job coach will have a working knowledge of the participant's specific assistive equipment configuration and how it interfaces with the job/education site equipment. The job coach will also have the skills to assist the participant in the use of the equipment and software in that setting.

Once a job coach is trained, NYSCB will contract directly with job coach (if approved as

a private vendor) or with the coach's employer.

On-the-Job Technical Support

On-the-job technical support is designed to provide assistance at the job/education site to train technical liaisons on the specific assistive platform within the participant's work/educational environment, and the level of on-going support necessary to enable the participant to perform his/her specific tasks.

Technical Support for Placement Staff

Recognizing that technology often plays a critical role in successful job development and placement, NYSCB will authorize technical support to job placement specialists to assist them in understanding how assistive devices can enable ATC graduates to meet the demands of potential work environments.

Refresher Training

The purpose of this service is to provide training or re-training on software or hardware on which the participant previously received training, and which is essential to the participant's current employment or education setting.

Remote Technical Assistance

Remote Technical Assistance allows for the provision of technical intervention services using the participant's computer and screen reader software offsite when there is a malfunction or computer use issue that requires the intervention of the Contractor. If remote access is not available via the computer, the Contractor can troubleshoot the computer issue via telephone. Telephone troubleshooting will only be used as an alternative solution.

ATC Training Hourly

This service should only be authorized after the completion of an ATC Training outcome service. It is to provide some additional training when needed on a specific software package needed for employment or educational purposes or to address some other specific computer training need.

Computer Software Training

Computer Software Training is provided to participants who have successfully completed ATC training at an ATC or at another NYSCB approved training source. Computer Software Training is used to provide software specific instruction to participants who require a thorough working knowledge of a particular software package for employment or educational purposes.

Strategic Technical Intervention

Strategic Technical Intervention is used to provide supplementary job/education site technical support services. Participants receiving this service should already be trained on their adaptive equipment configuration and know how to use their computer. Types of technical service covered could include (but not be limited to): new software installation; highly specialized and computer specific job task training; technical trouble-shooting.

Rehabilitation Engineering Services

Rehabilitation engineering is the application of engineering sciences to design, develop, adapt, test, evaluate, apply, and distribute technological solutions to problems confronted by individuals with disabilities. Functional areas addressed through rehabilitation engineering may include mobility, communication, hearing, vision, and cognition, and activities associated with employment, independent living, education, and integration into the community.

While most assistive technology needs can be met through NYSCB Assistive Technology Centers or approved high-tech consultants, it may be necessary at times to seek the assistance of a rehabilitation engineer skilled in adaptations needed for cognitive or physical impairments. Local ACCES-VR district offices can provide information on rehabilitation engineers they have used. VR counselors may purchase rehabilitation engineering services from ACCES-VR approved vendors at the rate approved by ACCES-VR for this service.

Comparable Benefits

Available comparable benefits must be used prior to authorizing rehabilitation technology services. See Chapter 11.00, Comparable Services and Benefits, for additional information.

Assistive Technology Devices

Assistive technology device means an item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. Conventional assistive devices are considered low tech devices and are usually recommended by a Vision Rehabilitation Therapist. See the *Comprehensive Services Contract Guidelines* for additional information regarding conventional assistive devices. Computer based devices are addressed in this chapter.

When to Provide Assistive Devices

Assistive devices may only be provided in Status 10 or above, and only after an evaluation and recommendation from an appropriate professional. Although it is unusual to provide assistive devices in Status 10, it is recognized that devices may sometimes be needed to conduct an assessment for the purpose of developing an IPE.

In circumstances where assistive technology is needed for the applicant to perform the functions required during a trial work, assistive technology devices may be loaned to the applicant with supervisory approval. Any loaned device(s) must be returned to NYSCB at the end of the trial work opportunity.

Employer Responsibility for Individuals Who Are Working

The VR counselor should consider the employer's responsibilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the employment provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The employer's responsibility for accommodating individuals with disabilities may include providing appropriate opportunities and acquiring or modifying equipment/devices needed for employment. These responsibilities may affect the scope of services provided to individuals who are eligible for VR services.

Economic Need

Assistive technology devices provided to support diagnostic services, including trial work are not contingent on the participant's economic need status.

Conventional assistive devices provided in conjunction with rehabilitation teaching and orientation and mobility services are not based on the participant's economic need status.

Though CCTV's are considered high tech equipment they are **not** contingent on the participant's economic need status.

The provision of all other assistive technology devices **is** contingent on the participant's economic need status.

General Guidelines, High-Tech Equipment

General guidelines for the acquisition of high-tech equipment (including software) have been established as follows:

1. Standard equipment configurations - NYSCB will not purchase multiple configurations for use at multiple locations (unless justified by job or task requirements)
2. Equipment will only be upgraded after all relevant factors are reviewed including the date of purchase of the equipment, whether the original equipment is no longer appropriate for the vocational goal, the upgrade is necessary for continued functioning. Upgrades need supervisory approval.
3. Software - NYSCB's responsibility is limited to the initial acquisition and installation of software. The VR counselor should document in the case record that the participant understands that it is their responsibility to maintain and/or upgrade software if the employer is unwilling to do so.
4. See High-Tech Purchasing Guidelines for information on purchasing high-tech equipment.

CCTVs

A CCTV connected to a computer requires an assistive technology assessment; a stand-alone CCTV must be recommended by a low vision specialist.

Braille Note-Takers

A portable computerized braille note-taker may be purchased upon the recommendation of a rehabilitation teacher. It is not necessary to obtain an ATC to purchase such a device.

Case Documentation

Using information from the evaluation, the VR counselor must document the following in the case record:

1. The reason the participant needs the equipment to participate in the VR process and obtain employment consistent with their IPE goal, and
2. That the equipment is being purchased after an evaluation and recommendation from an appropriate professional

Equipment Agreement Form

The Equipment Agreement Form outlines the participant's responsibilities associated with equipment purchased by NYSCB. Prior to or upon receiving high-tech equipment, the Equipment Agreement Form should be reviewed and signed by the participant.

Ownership of Equipment

All equipment provided to participants by NYSCB remains the property of NYSCB until successful case closure.

Maintenance and Insurance

NYSCB is responsible for maintenance and insurance until ownership is transferred to the participant. Once the transfer occurs, maintenance and insurance are the responsibility of the participant. The participant's employer should be encouraged to pay for maintenance and insurance.

Maintenance Agreements

When purchasing equipment through an E-Plan, maintenance is included in the purchase.

Insurance

Equipment which is owned by NYSCB can be insured through a participant's homeowner's or renter's policy or through a training site or employee's insurance policy.

Loaning Equipment

Equipment which is loaned to a participant by the district offices when needed for evaluation, training or placement must be returned to NYSCB upon request. Any equipment loaned must be documented in the case record.

Replacing Equipment

Prior to transfer of ownership to the participant, equipment provided to a participant may be replaced if lost or damaged through theft, fire, flood, vandalism or other acts or occurrences beyond the control of the participant when:

1. an insurance report or police affidavit is submitted to the VR counselor documenting the loss, and
2. after a review of the documentation and other circumstances surrounding the loss, the VR counselor and senior counselor determine that the loss has occurred under circumstances permitting replacement of the equipment.

If the equipment is covered by an insurance policy, NYSCB will only cover the amount of the participant's deductible.

Once ownership is transferred to a participant, it is the participants responsibility to replace their equipment.

Introduction

Maintenance is a supportive VR service and can only be provided to enable a participant to receive or engage in another VR service.

Maintenance payments are not intended to ameliorate poverty or guarantee a participant's and/or their families a standard of living equal to what they may be accustomed.

Federal Definition

Maintenance is monetary support provided to an individual for expenses such as food, shelter, and clothing, that are in excess of the normal expenses of the individual that are necessitated by participation in an assessment for determining eligibility and VR needs or the individual's receipt of VR services in accordance with an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Times When Maintenance May Be Needed

Maintenance assistance is frequently required when a participant is receiving the following services:

1. Assessment Maintenance payments for room and board may be paid to allow participants to access assessment services (i.e. short-term lodging and meal costs while receiving specialized tests in an out-of-town medical center).
2. Medical Restoration Maintenance may be paid to allow a participant to receive medical restoration services.
3. Training Maintenance payments for room and board may be paid to allow a participant to engage in training.
4. Placement Maintenance may be provided to facilitate placement. For example, maintenance may be provided for participants in employment and work readiness programs; maintenance may be provided to a participant who moves out-of-town to accept employment.

Maintenance for Family Members

1. NYSCB does not pay maintenance for family members unless it is necessary to allow the participant to engage in a VR service.
2. NYSCB does not pay maintenance for family members when a participant is relocating for a job.
3. Authorization of maintenance for family members requires district manager approval.

Description of Maintenance Services During Assessment, Training and Medical Restoration or Other VR Services

Maintenance in the form of room and meal expenses may be provided to participants during assessment and medical restoration.

Room and meal expenses for college students are described in Section 10.01, College Training.

Room and meal expenses (including heat and electricity) may be provided for a participant who is required to live away from home while participating in a rehabilitation program in accordance with the following guidelines:

Short Term Living Situation (Hotel or Motel) - Individuals can reside in a hotel or motel for a maximum of eight weeks. When the VR counselor knows that assessment, training or physical restoration services will continue beyond eight weeks, they should begin to look for a long-term living situation at the outset of service provision. A long-term living situation must be found by the end of the eighth week.

1. Time frame - up to a maximum of eight weeks with the possibility of a four-week extension with adequate justification and senior counselor approval.
2. Room expenses - an allowance to meet the actual cost of room expenses incurred by the participant may be provided. This allowance cannot exceed the prevailing state lodging allowance rate.
3. Meal expenses - when included with the cost of the rehabilitation program, the actual cost of meals may be provided up to a maximum of \$25 per day. When the participant is required to obtain or prepare their own meals, they may be provided an allowance of \$25 /day.

Long-Term Living Situation (includes, but is not limited to: congregate housing provided by vocational schools or private agencies; transitional apartments, and private apartments occupied by one or more persons):

1. Time Frame - anytime during the service provision and after the eight-week period has expired.
2. Room Expenses/Meal Expenses - Actual costs up to a maximum of \$1,000/month may be provided for lodging (including utilities). A maximum of \$300/month may be provided for meals.

Individuals Who Commute to Services

Individuals who commute to and from their rehabilitation program are not entitled to any room or meal allowance.

Example of Maintenance Services During Medical Restoration

Maintenance is not commonly needed during the provision of medical restoration services. However, when it is needed, it may be paid to a participant or vendor in accordance with the allowances established above.

Example: A participant from upstate New York is scheduled for eye surgery in a NYC hospital. NYSCB may pay the actual cost of receipted hotel expenses up to the maximum allowed for state employees and meal costs up to \$25 per day if the participant needs to arrive in the out-of-town location the day before treatment.

Description of Maintenance Services to Accept Employment

Maintenance may be provided to participants who have relocated to accept employment in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. Room (lodging) Expenses - An allowance to meet the actual cost of lodging expenses in accordance with the allowances established for maintenance during assessment, training and physical restoration may be paid for a maximum of 60 days.

NYSCB may pay security deposits in lieu of one month's rent.

2. Board (Meal) Expenses - An allowance of \$25.00/day may be authorized until receipt of the first paycheck.

Absenteeism

Maintenance in the form of room and meals will continue to be paid for participants who are living away from home and participating in evaluation or training programs when the absence is due to illness, or urgent personal business.

Notification of Missed Appointments

VR counselors should be aware that community rehabilitation programs are required to notify VR counselors of the participant's failure to appear for appointments or failure to cancel appointments. The community rehabilitation program should document the missed appointment or failure to cancel in the service progress report in accordance with the *Comprehensive Services Contract (CSC) Guidelines*.

Lodging, Special Considerations

It is the policy of NYSCB that participants whose IPEs include reimbursement for housing, shall be lodged in sites which are in conformance with basic health and safety requirements.

Landlords or agencies providing the housing are responsible for conformance with these requirements. Due to the regulation of hotels and motels, documentation conformance is not necessary when a participant is residing in a hotel or motel.

Types of Lodging

Housing includes, but is not limited to hotels, motels, congregate housing provided by vocational schools or private agencies, transitional apartments and private apartments occupied by one or more people.

All housing settings must meet prevailing requirements for health and safety conditions.

Appropriate Documentation - Apartments and Single-Family Homes

In situations involving apartments or single-family homes in New York State, the applicable documentation will usually consist of a copy of the owner's Certificate of Occupancy. In areas that do not have a certification program, it will be necessary to forward a copy of that area's equivalent documentation.

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For all other situations, it will be necessary for the VR counselor to furnish documentation indicating that the residence complies with the prevailing local codes governing the type of residence being utilized.

Document must be scanned into the participant's case record.

Appropriate Documentation, Group Homes and Congregate Living Situations

For group homes and other congregate living situations which are regulated by a government agency, it will be necessary to forward copies of the facility's approval documents issued by that government agency. Document must be scanned into the participant's case record.

Clothing Allowance

A one-time clothing allowance up to \$300 may be provided at any time during the VR process to a participant who has a documented need for clothing to engage in services or achieve their vocational goal.

Economic Need

All maintenance costs associated with the provision of assessment services are not contingent on the participant's economic need status.

When provided to support non-assessment services, maintenance services are contingent on the participant's economic need status.

See Chapter 5.00, Determination of Economic Need, for additional information.

Comparable Benefits

Available comparable benefits must be used prior to authorizing maintenance. See Chapter 11.00, Comparable Services and Benefits, for additional information.

Introduction

Transportation services is travel and related expenses that are necessary to enable an applicant or participant to engage in a VR service, including expenses for training in the use of public transportation.

Scope of Services

Transportation is considered a supportive service and can only be provided to enable a participant to receive or engage in another VR service. Transportation services include

1. actual fares/travel costs for the participant to use public or private conveyances,
2. actual fares/travel costs for an individual escorting the participant when the participant is not able to travel independently to a service or when the total cost of this method of transportation is less than other options,
3. mileage reimbursement at the state rate when another individual provides transportation for the participant using a personal vehicle,
4. relocation or moving expenses in accordance with the guidelines in this section,
5. hourly costs for a travel aide when required due to the severity of the participant's disability or the lack of other transportation options,

VR Counselor Responsibility

To minimize the cost of transportation services, "no cost" or "low cost" options which meet the participant's needs should be explored with the participant at the beginning of the VR process. Every effort should be made to have the participant travel independently using public transportation (when they are able to safely and comfortably use this option) or to use transportation services available at no cost to NYSCB. For those participants who use public transportation, VR counselors should discuss the availability of reduced fare cards.

Transportation Options

During intake process, VR counselors should discuss the following transportation options to determine the method(s) to be used by the participant to travel to VR

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services. When providing transportation, the lowest cost option for NYSCB should be used first.

1. Transportation by a family member or friend using either a personal vehicle or accompanying the participant using public transportation
2. Transportation paid by Medicaid (i.e. taxi service to medical appointments)
3. Volunteer providers
4. Public transportation when the participant is able to safely and comfortably use public transportation
5. Paratransit systems, local office for the aging transportation services, where available or other community resources available to older individuals or individuals with disabilities other than blindness
6. Group van service
7. Individual car service or taxi cab service

Selection of Transportation Providers

When selecting among the alternatives listed above, in addition to the cost of the services, the VR counselor and participant should also take into account the availability and the appropriateness of the selected option.

Payment for Travel Aides

When necessary due to the severity of the participant's disability or the lack of other transportation options, NYSCB may pay an individual to provide travel aide services for a participant. Travel aides will be paid minimum wage. This rate can only be exceeded with senior counselor approval and case documentation indicating that a travel aide cannot be secured at minimum wage. A member of the participant's family who customarily provides travel assistance or an individual already receiving payment by NYSCB or a comparable benefit to provide personal assistance services cannot be paid to provide travel aide services.

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Transportation Services During Assessment Services

NYSCB may pay the actual fare and travel costs to use public or private conveyances for participants during assessment services.

Transportation Services During Training

NYSCB may pay the actual costs of public transportation costs (or when appropriate, mileage reimbursement) for

1. travel to training at the beginning and end of the program,
2. travel to and from training at a community rehabilitation program or other training site (except a college or university campus) during any break that is four or more days between when the program ends and begins again. (See Section 10.01, College Training for guidelines for transportation services for college students.)
3. emergency leave from training due to the death or sudden hospitalization of a member of the participant's immediate family (See Section 9.12, Services to Family Members for the definition of family member); and
4. daily travel to and from training for commuting participants.

Transportation services will not be paid for overnight or weekend travel unless required by the training program.

Transportation Services During a Job Search

The actual fares and travel costs to use public or private conveyances may be paid for participants to attend job clubs, conduct a job search and travel to job interviews, when planned by the VR counselor and participant. Travel receipts must be submitted to the VR counselor to receive payment.

Transportation Services When Relocating for Employment

Allowable relocation expenses may be paid by NYSCB for the permanent relocation of a participant (or a participant and their family), when relocation is necessary for the participant to obtain employment, employment has been secured and the participant met economic need prior to obtaining employment.

Allowable Relocation Expenses

Individuals who meet the criteria for reimbursement for relocation expenses can be reimbursed their actual costs up to a maximum of \$1,500 for either an in-state move or an out-of-state move. The level of reimbursement will require three bids. Allowable relocation expenses include:

1. actual cost of moving household goods by commercial carrier or rental truck/trailer;
2. actual cost of packing and unpacking if performed by a vendor and not included in the costs in #1 above;
3. cost of meals and lodging (for the participant only), during transit in accordance with established per diem rates. See Section 9.06, Maintenance, for additional information; and
4. cost of tolls and mileage at the state-approved rate for automobile travel, rental truck/trailer, or the fare of a common carrier if not using a private automobile (if not included in the costs in #1 above).

Receipts for meals, lodging and tolls must be submitted to the VR counselor to receive payment.

Transportation Services During Post-Employment Status

Transportation services may be provided as a post-employment service to enable a participant to engage in other VR services.

Economic Need

The provision of transportation services is not contingent on the participant's economic need status when provided in support of assessment services, when provided in support of other services which are not contingent upon economic need; and when provided to enable the participant to attend an administrative review, mediation or an administrative hearing.

The provision of all other transportation services is contingent on the participant's economic need status.

See Chapter 5.00, Determination of Economic Need, for additional information.

Comparable Benefits

Available comparable benefits must be used prior to authorizing transportation. See Chapter 11.00, Comparable Services and Benefits, for additional information.

Payment of Transportation Services

When payment is to a contract agency, the agency should provide the participant with transportation money only for days in attendance and bill NYSCB accordingly.

When payment is directly to a participant, the VR counselor should inform the participant that they are required to provide documentation of transportation expenses, the type of transportation used and the dates that the transportation occurred. Mass transit, with published rates, do not require documentation.

For relocation expenses, when the actual costs are not known in advance, the participant can receive reimbursement for allowable costs upon submittal of receipts to the VR counselor.

INTERPRETER SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAF-BLIND

9.08.01

Introduction

NYSCB provides interpreter services for individuals who are deaf-blind to facilitate effective communication during the VR process.

See Section 1.02, Guidelines for Communication, for additional information.

Purpose and Scope of Services

The purpose of interpreter services is to facilitate the exchange of information between the participant who is deaf-blind and the VR counselor to enable the participant to be actively engaged in the VR process.

Interpreter services will be provided during contacts between the VR counselor and the deaf-blind participant and during the provision of VR services.

A team of deaf-blind interpreters may be required for a session depending on the expected length, location, content and communication level of the participant. This decision will be made in consultation with the initial interpreter or interpreter coordinator in advance of the session.

Who May Benefit from Interpreter Services?

Interpreter services will be provided for deaf-blind participants who have a significant hearing loss which prevents adequate speech discrimination or to facilitate two-way communication so that deaf-blind participants have equal access to all VR services.

Qualifications for Providing Interpreter Services

Interpreters services are provided by interpreters who are certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and/or the National Association of the Deaf. If a certified interpreter is not available, a non-certified interpreter may be used, provided the participant agrees.

Assessment of Communication Skills

When necessary, the deaf-blind participant's communication skills should be evaluated by a credentialed evaluator to determine the best means of communication.

INTERPRETER SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAF-BLIND

9.08.02

Economic Need

Interpreter services are not contingent on the participant's economic need status. See Chapter 5.00, Determination of Economic Need, for additional information.

Comparable Benefits

Available comparable benefits must be used prior to authorizing interpreter services. See Chapter 11.00, Comparable Services and Benefits, for additional information.

INTERPRETER SERVICES FOR NON-ENGLISH-SPEAKING INDIVIDUALS

9.09.01

Introduction

NYSCB provides foreign language interpreters for participants who do not speak English to enable them to engage in the VR process and communicate in their native language.

See Section 1.02, Guidelines for Communication, for additional information.

Purpose and Scope of Service

The purpose of interpreter services is to facilitate the exchange of information between the participant and the VR counselor to enable the participant to be actively engaged in the VR process.

Interpreter services may be provided during contacts between the VR counselor and the participant and during the provision of VR services.

Qualifications for Foreign Language Interpreters

Foreign language interpreter services are provided by interpreters who are conversant in both English and the foreign language which they interpret and have a high school diploma or equivalent.

Economic Need

Interpreter services are not contingent on the participant's economic need status. See Chapter 5.00, Determination of Economic Need, for additional information.

Comparable Benefits

Available comparable benefits must be used prior to authorizing interpreter services. See Chapter 11.00, Comparable Services and Benefits, for additional information.

Introduction

Medical restoration services (physical or mental restoration) are designed to correct or substantially modify within a reasonable period of time a physical or medical condition which is stable or slowly progressive, and results in a substantial impediment to employability. Medical restoration services are provided to enable a participant to achieve an employment outcome by reducing or eliminating functional limitations resulting from the disability, thus lessening the impediment to employment and providing greater opportunity for vocational success.

Examples

Examples of medical restoration services include the following:

1. Diagnosis of and treatment for mental and emotional disorders by qualified personnel in accordance with state licensure laws
2. Dentistry
3. Nursing services
4. Necessary hospitalization (either inpatient or outpatient care) in connection with surgery or treatment or clinic services
5. Drugs and supplies
6. Prosthetic and orthotic devices
7. Eyeglasses and visual services, including visual training, and the examination and services necessary for the prescription and provision of eyeglasses, contact lenses, microscopic lenses, telescopic lenses, and other special visual aids prescribed by personnel who are qualified within state licensure laws
8. Podiatry
9. Physical therapy
10. Occupational therapy
11. Speech or hearing therapy
12. Mental health services
13. Treatment of either acute or chronic medical complications and emergencies that are associated with or arise out of the provision of physical and mental restoration services, or that are inherent in the condition of treatment
14. Special services for the treatment of individuals with end-stage renal disease, including transplantation dialysis, artificial kidneys and supplies
15. Other medical or medically related rehabilitation services

Criteria for the Provision of Medical Restoration Services

The following criteria must be met prior to authorizing medical restoration services:

1. Participant must be eligible for VR services,
2. Participant has been determined to meet economic need,
3. The physical or mental disability should be stable or slowly progressive,
4. Medical restoration services must be necessary to achieve the employment outcome and included on the IPE,
5. The restoration service(s) must be expected to correct or substantially reduce an impairment that causes a substantial impediment to employment within a reasonable period of time as determined by the nature of the participant's disability, the prognosis regarding life expectancy and employability; and the participant's general health.

Prior to the provision of medical restoration services, the participant must have had a recent examination by a licensed physician or low vision specialist. In some cases, an examination within the past twelve months will suffice, e.g., for participants with certain chronic diseases or disabilities such as controlled epilepsy, congenital defects or those from whom appliances such as orthoses or prostheses are needed. The determination as to whether a more recent exam is needed can be made by the VR counselor in consultation with the senior counselor.

Consultation with Medical Specialists

The VR counselor can arrange a medical consultation with an appropriate medical specialist during the provision of medical restoration services. They may also request a second medical opinion when needed to determine the appropriateness of the medical restoration service.

Provision of Audiological Services

NYSCB may provide audiological aids to participants who require them to function in employment when the hearing loss meets the definition of severe hearing impairment as documented by an audiologist (See Chapter 8.00, Services for Individuals, who are deaf-blind.) The provision of audiological aids is contingent on economic eligibility unless the participant meets the definition of deaf-blind and is identified as deaf-blind on the VR Intake form/VR Eligibility Determination Worksheet. Many individuals lose hearing as they age. This is a medical issue that must be addressed by a medical care provider.

It is presumed that hearing loss becomes a rehabilitation issue when it meets the definition of severe hearing impairment and directly impacts the participant's ability to engage in the VR process and employment.

Provision of Psychological/Psychiatric Services

Psychological and psychiatric therapy may be provided to NYSCB participants who have a mental or emotional disability that can be reduced or substantially modified through the provision of such services. However, psychological or psychiatric therapy is not intended to meet ongoing mental health needs. Participants should be encouraged to use community resources that will be affordable and available after NYSCB funding for this service is completed.

Duration of Psychological Services

When psychological and psychiatric therapy is provided it must be short-term in duration, not to exceed 18 months. In all cases of psychological and psychiatric therapy, the VR counselor must arrange a review of the participant's case with the senior counselor every six months.

Medical Care for Acute Conditions

NYSCB may provide medical restoration services for treatment of either acute or chronic medical complications that arise out of the provision of other medical restoration services or are inherent in the condition under treatment which if not cared for would complicate or delay the rehabilitation program. If the seriousness of the complication is such that it interferes with the possibility of achieving the employment outcome, it may be necessary to re-evaluate the participant's IPE or determine that case closure is appropriate.

Provision of Dental Services

While NYSCB does not assume responsibility for general dental care, dental services may be provided when the dental evaluation indicates that the condition of the teeth and gums are so severe that they will interfere with the participant's ability to achieve an employment outcome.

An evaluation of a participant's dental condition may be indicated when the general and/or specialty medical examination reveal(s) the existence of serious maxillo-facial

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problems and/or diseases of the gums and teeth that may cause or aggravate problems of speech, personal appearance, personal adjustment or other specific health problems. Routine dental conditions such as caries, gum abscess or multiple extractions with the provision of dentures do not meet the criteria for provision of dental services.

Dental implants are considered cosmetic restoration and will not be paid for by NYSCB.

Selection of a Service Provider

For guidance in selecting a service provider See Chapter 3.00, Assessments and Evaluations During the VR Process.

Economic Need

All medical restoration services, except low vision aids, are contingent on the participant's economic need status.

Low vision aids are not contingent upon economic need.

See Chapter 5.00, Determination of Economic Need, for additional information.

Comparable Benefits

Available comparable benefits must be used prior to authorizing medical restoration services. See Chapter 11.00, Comparable Services and Benefits, for additional information.

Payment of Medical Restoration Services

If no comparable benefit is available for the payment of medical restoration services, NYSCB can purchase the service in accordance with the Medicaid Fee Schedule. For services not included in the Medicaid Fee Schedule, prior approval for the purchase must be obtained from the district manager.

Introduction

Within the context of an IPE, NYSCB may provide modest home modifications to assist the participant in obtaining access to their house or apartment, or to make features of the residence more accessible. Modest home modifications are minor structural changes such as widening doorways, construction of ramps or installation of lifts, and installation of grab bars in a bathroom. Home modification services must directly benefit the participant in terms of achieving an employment outcome.

Modifications may only be made to those home features that are critical to participation in training to achieve an employment outcome.

All modifications or repairs must follow prescribed federal, state and local standards. Specifications developed by the American National Standards Institute (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) should be consulted when necessary for technical information regarding accessibility. The American National Standards Institute has a website that provides information regarding accessibility issues.

When to Provide Home Modification Services

Home modification can only be provided to participants in accordance with an approved IPE upon completion of a Home Modification Evaluation. An evaluation to determine the need for home modification may be conducted during Status 02 or 06. Exceptions to allow for provision of home modification services prior to development of an IPE may only be made

1. with prior written approval of the district manager for modifications costing less than \$50,000, and
2. with prior written approval of the district manager and designated Senior Management for modifications costing \$50,000 or more.

Limitations on the Provision of Home Modification Services

The following limitations on the provision of home modification services should be discussed with the participant prior to initiating an evaluation for home modification services:

1. Initiation of a Home Modification Evaluation is not a guarantee that NYSCB will finance, in whole or in part, such modifications. It is important to emphasize that just because an evaluator may take measurements in a specific part of the house

or discusses possible modifications, it does not mean that the home will necessarily be modified.

2. NYSCB must consider functional needs of the participant, and the least costly way to meet those needs. Aesthetic issues may only be considered if they do not increase the cost of the project.
3. NYSCB will provide home modification services only once for a participant. If an individual has previously received home modification services, a waiver will only be considered if the circumstances that warrant additional service are beyond the control of the participant (e.g., a house fire). The waiver must be obtained from the district manager and documented in the case record.
4. It is the participant's responsibility to insure, repair and maintain modifications.
5. Only the primary residence of the participant can be modified.
6. No home modification services can be provided to participants who are currently involved in or planning new construction (including any additions) of a home. Individuals planning a new addition should take into consideration accessibility issues. NYSCB can assist by referring or locating a specialist to recommend features that should be considered when building a house or addition.
7. Participants considering a move to a new or different home or apartment may seek consultation on accessibility issues, but should not make assumptions that NYSCB will modify an inaccessible house or apartment after the participant has moved in.

The Home Modification Specialist

The Home Modification Specialist (Specialist) plays a key role in the home modification process. The Specialist should have sufficient knowledge of disability-related accommodations and construction to develop bid ready specifications while monitoring progress of a contractor. The Specialist does the following:

1. Performs the home modification accessibility evaluation
2. Develops recommendations, specifications, and drawings of the needed modifications and submits the same to NYSCB for its review and approval
3. Answers bidder's questions at the bidder's conference
4. Recommends necessary inspections (and may also obtain them)
5. Monitors the progress of the modification
6. Performs the final inspection that will initiate payment for the home modification services

Qualifications of Home Modification Specialists

A rehabilitation engineer, architect, contractor, or other individual with sufficient knowledge of disability-related accommodations and construction to develop bid-ready specifications may assume the role of home modification specialist. The program unit home modification coordinator can provide support in locating and must approve a Specialist in the participant's area.

Specialists cannot have a conflict of interest when dealing with either the homeowner or the contractors. The Specialist or their employer is therefore prohibited from bidding on the modifications.

Payment to Home Modification Specialists

Specialists are paid at an appropriate hourly rate, not to exceed \$100/hour. Specialists may be paid for on-site services and report preparation for up to 12 hours. Up to 12 additional hours may be authorized with senior counselor approval. The district manager must approve any authorizations above a total of 24 hours. The Specialists may also be reimbursed for travel time and travel expenses in accordance with the "Individual Private Vendor Mileage Reimbursement" policy (See Chapter 16.00, Private Vendors, for additional information.) In consultation with the program unit home modification coordinator, the VR counselor will issue payment to the Specialist.

Contingent upon submission and approval of appropriate documentation, Specialists can expect to receive payment at the following points in the home modification process:

1. Upon submittal of the Initial Assessment of the Scope of the Project
2. Upon submittal and acceptance of the formal Home Modification Evaluation Report
3. If they continued to monitor the home modification project, upon completion of the modification and the Specialist's submittal of a final inspection report confirming the work has been completed satisfactorily

Expenditure Review/Approval

The total cost of home modifications may not exceed \$49,999 unless previously approved by both the district manager and designated senior management. Most modifications will cost considerably less than this amount.

HOME MODIFICATION SERVICES

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The senior counselor and the district manager must approve every IPE and all expenditures involving home modifications. Plans to provide home modifications should be discussed with the senior counselor prior to development of the IPE.

Economic Need

Home modification services are contingent on the participant economic need status. (See Chapter 5.00, Determination of Economic Need, for additional information.)

Home modification assessments are not contingent on the participant's economic need status.

Participants Who Do Not Meet Economic Need

If a participant does not meet economic need criteria, but wishes to proceed with having the work done at their own expense, the VR counselor will provide the participant with a copy of the Home Modification Evaluation Report. Prior to providing a copy of the report, the VR counselor must ask the participant to sign a document stating that the participant understands that NYSCB has no further obligations or responsibility in relation to any home modifications pursued by the participant.

Comparable Benefits

Available comparable benefits must be used prior to authorizing home modification services. See Chapter 11.00, Comparable Services and Benefits, for additional information.

Preliminary Steps

Before beginning the home modification process, the VR counselor should discuss the "Limitations on the Provision of Home Modifications" with the participant as outlined on the first two pages of this policy.

In addition, the following steps should be taken before beginning the home modification process:

1. Discuss with the participant any accessibility problems that interfere with their ability to participate in training or employment (home or community based).

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2. Conduct a task analysis of the essential functions that the participant must perform to engage in training or employment. The VR counselor may choose to consult with a rehabilitation teacher, occupational therapist (OT), physical therapist (PT) or other qualified professional to confirm the need for modification services and identify the modifications needed to enable the individual to perform the essential functions identified in the task analysis. The VR counselor makes the final determination regarding the necessary home modifications. The results of this consultation will be shared with the Home Modification Specialist who will conduct the formal assessment.
3. Ascertain if the participant is currently involved with or planning new construction of a home or plans to move. If so, no home modification services can be provided at the participant's current residence.
4. Determine whether NYSCB has provided home modification services in the past. If modifications were made, determine if circumstances requiring additional modification services are beyond the participant's control. Under those conditions, the district manager may approve a waiver to provide the additional service. If the conditions were not beyond the participant's control, no additional modification services may be provided.
5. Explore with the participant the feasibility of moving the participant to a more accessible location. Moving expenses are allowable if those expenses are less costly than provision of home modifications to the individual's current residence (See Section 9.07, Transportation for information regarding allowable relocation expenses). Temporary or portable modifications should also be explored.
6. Obtain written assurance from the participant that they intend to stay in the residence to be modified.
7. Explore resources for comparable benefits, e.g., Medicare, Office for the Aging Home Care Program, Medicaid Home and Community Based Waiver, Social Security (Impairment Related Work Expense program and PASS), independent living centers, Rural Housing Administration, Equipment Loan Fund, realty associations, Division of Veterans Affairs, service clubs, or participant contribution.
8. If someone other than the participant owns the property, obtain written permission from the owner to perform the modification.
9. Provide the participant with the NYSCB *Participant Handout on Home Modifications*.

10. Include Home Modification assessment on the IPE and document the participant's responsibilities and understanding of the limitations on the provision of this service.

Assessing the Need for Home Modification Services

Based on the VR counselor's analysis of the tasks to be performed by the participant and any OT/PT assessments, the VR counselor should provide information to the program unit home modification coordinator regarding the functional needs to be evaluated in relation to the participant's employment goal. The program unit home modification coordinator will coordinate with the VR counselor and the Home Modification Specialist to monitor implementation of the home modification(s). The program unit home modification coordinator will do the following:

1. Locate a Specialist to perform an initial assessment of the scope of the proposed home modification. The program unit home modification coordinator will provide the Specialist with a copy of the *Home Modification Guidelines for Home Modification Specialists*.
2. Require the Specialist to provide, within 10 business days of the Specialist's visit to the participant's home, a written "Initial Assessment of Scope of the Home Modification Project" report containing the following information:
 - a. The scope of home modifications recommended i.e., what will be involved in modifying each area of the home for which the VR counselor requested assessment. No detailed drawings or specifications are developed at this time.
 - b. A list of associated adaptive equipment recommended for the participant.
 - c. Estimated costs for recommended modifications and adaptive equipment.
 - d. Necessary inspections to determine whether existing systems in the home comply with applicable codes for the recommended modifications. In all instances, the participant is responsible for the costs to bring the residence up to code. For example:
 - i. If a wheelchair lift is recommended, an electrical inspection may be needed.
 - ii. If a roll-in-shower is recommended, a plumbing inspection may be needed.

- e. Estimated time frame for completion of the project.
- f. If the participant is having other non-NYSCB funded work done on the house, recommend which component (participant renovations or NYSCB sponsored home modifications) should take place first. The Specialist should have discussed the impact of proposed home modifications with the contractor for the other renovations.
- g. Possible alternative devices or accommodations considered which would negate the need for some or all the modifications.

Determination of Home Modification Services to be Provided

Before meeting with the participant, the VR counselor must review/discuss the outcome of the assessment and possible options with the senior counselor. The VR counselor should then:

1. meet with participant to discuss the Specialist's recommendations, results of the discussion with the senior counselor, cost estimates, inspection results, and relevance of the modifications to the participant's goal to determine what home modifications and associated adaptive equipment will be provided, if any;
2. confirm that the Specialist or participant has coordinated/obtained any needed inspections/certificates required by local village, town, county or state ordinances; and
3. enter the Home Modification service, along with any comparable benefits and specific responsibilities and understandings of the participant, onto the IPE, obtaining both the senior counselor and district manager's approval.

Final Approval

It is the VR counselor's responsibility in consultation with the senior counselor to determine which modifications, if any, are necessary to enable the participant to reach the vocational goal, and to make the final determination of which recommended home modifications to purchase.

Procedure to Obtain Home Modifications

Upon approval of the home modification(s) to be completed and inclusion of home modifications and related equipment on the IPE, the VR counselor must do the following:

1. Review the Fiscal Procedures in this chapter.
2. Verify that the appropriate documentation has been completed, including the following:
 - a. Specialists' "Initial Assessment of Scope of Home Modification Project."
 - b. Statement of Understanding of Limitations on the Provision of Home Modification Services on the IPE
 - c. Waiver for Second Home Modification (if required)
 - d. Participant's written intent to remain at the residence
 - e. Landlord's written permission to conduct home modification on premises (if required)
3. Obtain approval from the senior counselor for the recommended home modifications and advise the program unit home modification coordinator of the modifications and equipment to be provided. The program unit home modification coordinator will contact the Specialist with the information provided by the VR counselor and request a written "Home Modification Evaluation Report" to include all of the following information to seek proposals to do the work:
 - a. Detailed specifications, including related plumbing and electrical work
 - b. "Building permit ready" drawings
 - c. Estimated cost of home modifications
 - d. Estimated time frame for completion of the job
 - e. Names and contact information for potential bidders for the work (if possible)

The Home Modification Evaluation Report must be submitted within 20 business days of the meeting with the participant to agree on the work desired.
4. Review the report with the program unit home modification coordinator and/or the Specialist prior to meeting with the participant, and owner if applicable, to obtain final approval of home modification plans.
5. Review the specifications and drawings with the participant, and property owner if applicable, for final approval. Any changes requested by the participant or

property owner must be reviewed and approved by the Specialist (this can be accomplished through a phone call from the participant's home). If the changes will result in more than \$1,000 additional costs beyond the estimated cost in #2.c. above, senior counselor approval must be obtained and documented in the case record.

6. Obtain signatures from the participant and from the property owner (if different from the participant) indicating approval of the planned home modifications.

The Home Modification Evaluation Report

Within 10 days of receipt of the final Home Modification Evaluation Report, the VR counselor and the program unit home modification coordinator will determine whether the report is correct and complete. When necessary, appropriate revisions must be incorporated into the report. The VR counselor should keep a copy of all materials related to the home modification in the case record.

The estimated cost of the home modification will determine next steps in the process.

Pre-Bidder's Conference

All contractors must participate in a pre-bidder's conference so that they can fully understand the job before submitting a proposal.

If it is anticipated that the cost of home modifications will be under \$50,000, the program unit home modification coordinator, in consultation with the VR counselor may propose a date(s) acceptable with the participant for the pre-bidder's conference to take place in the participant's home. As a general rule, the pre-bidders conference should take place approximately four weeks from the date of receipt of the Home Modification Evaluation Report. See Fiscal Procedures in this chapter for additional information.

The program unit home modification coordinator will establish dates for a Pre-Bidders conference associated with the formal bidding process for modifications costing \$49,999 or more. See Fiscal Procedures in this chapter for additional information.

Implementation of the Home Modification, VR Counselor's Role

Following selection of a contractor to complete the home modification, the VR counselor should maintain contact with the participant and the Home Modification

Specialist to ascertain and document that the work is completed as specified. However, general responsibility for monitoring implementation of the modification(s) is the primary responsibility of the program unit home modification coordinator.

Role of the Home Modification Specialist During Implementation of Home Modification

During the implementation of the home modification, the Specialist may

1. assist in the scheduling/initiation of the home modification and follow the progress of the contractor;
2. if the modification is complicated, or problems are foreseen, perform interim inspection(s);
3. mediate any needed problem resolution/recommend remedial action; and
4. at the completion of the work by the contractor, make a final inspection, including verification of receipt of "Certificate of Occupancy" and provide a written report documenting that the home modification work is complete.

If the Home Modification Specialist is not available, the program unit home modification coordinator may assume the role of the Specialist during the implementation phase of the Home Modification.

Role of VR Counselor at Completion of the Home Modification

Upon completion of the Home Modification, the VR counselor must

1. within 7-10 days of the completion of the home modification, confirm with the participant that the work was completed to the participant's satisfaction;
2. upon confirmation by the Specialist or program unit home modification coordinator that the work was completed satisfactorily, submit related receiving report;
3. if the Specialist monitored the home modification through confirmation of satisfactory completion of work, authorize final payment to the Specialist; and
4. advise the participant that as discussed earlier in the process, upon completion

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of the home modification, responsibility for maintenance and repair not covered under the contractor's warranty, as well as for removal, site restoration, or replacement rests with the participant.

Fiscal Procedure - Projects That Have a Total Cost of less than \$ 15,000

Upon receipt of recommendations for the home modification service, if the total cost is less than \$15,000, the following procedures will be followed:

1. NYSCB home office staff will review the project proposal, including all materials sent by the VR counselor, and send the project proposal to approved contractors along with the NYSCB-designed bid form. Contractors will submit their bids by the date indicated on the bid form.
2. NYSCB Home Office will review all bids received, however in the event less than three bids are received, a justification must be provided explaining why three bids could not be obtained. This information will then be forward through the OCFS/NYS purchasing approval process.
3. The bid information will be reviewed, a requisition will be submitted for review and approval, and a purchase order will eventually be issued by the BSC to the winning bidder (provided that the bidder can meet all the specifications outlined in the project proposal). A copy of the approved purchase order will be provided to the contractor awarded the home modification project.
4. NYSCB Home Office will provide documentation of approval to the originating VR counselor with the purchase order number and dollar amount. The District Office will file the documentation of approval in the participant's record of service and will apply the total dollar amount against the District Office's VR allocation.
5. The contractor will be informed by NYSCB Home Office that work should begin as soon as possible. NYSCB Home Office at that time, will provide contact

information to the contractor for fiscal concerns that may arise and will inform the contractor that all other issues regarding the modification should be addressed to the VR counselor.

6. Upon satisfactory completion of the home modification, the VR counselor will submit the invoice information/claim for payment forms to NYSCB Home Office. The request for payment will then be processed in accordance with current policy.

Fiscal Procedures – Projects That Have a Total Cost of more than 15,000.

When a home modification is expected to be more than \$15,000, the following steps should be taken: Generally speaking, NYSCB will not approve modifications of \$50,000 or more.

1. NYSCB Home Office staff will review the project proposal, including all materials sent from the District Office, and schedule the date and time for the pre-bidder's conference to be held at the participant's home, when the participant, VR counselor and/or the Home Modification Specialist can be present. This information along with a list of qualified contractors will be forwarded on for further review based upon current agency policy.
2. If OCFS/NYS requires it, an announcement will be placed in the New York State Contract Reporter and a Request for a Bid for the home modification project indicating the bid opening date will be developed in accordance with current policy. NYSCB Home Office staff will notify potential contractors regarding the date of the pre-bid conference.
3. The pre-bidders conference will be conducted at the specified time. Copies of the Request for Bid, specifications for the project, and architectural drawings will be provided to the attending contractors by NYSCB staff.

4. All contractors who attended the conference and are interested in the project should submit bids to the designated contact at the address provided no later than the date and time specified on the Request for Bid.
5. After the bids due date/time specified in the Request for Bid, all submitted bids will be reviewed, the bidder submitting the lowest cost bid will be selected. NYSCB home office will then process the needed paper work and inform the winning bidder.
6. After NYSCB receives all necessary approvals NYSCB will provide the information to the awarded contractor.
7. NYSCB Home Office staff will provide a copy of the relevant documentation to the originating VR counselor with the purchase order number and dollar amount. The District Office will file the documentation in the participant's case record and apply the total dollar amount against their VR allocation.
8. The contractor will be informed by NYSCB Home Office that work should begin as soon as possible. NYSCB Home Office at that time, will provide contact information to the contractor for fiscal concerns that may arise and will inform the contractor that all other issues regarding the modification should be addressed to the VR counselor.
9. Upon satisfactory completion of the home modification, the VR counselor will submit the invoice information/claim for payment forms to NYSCB Home Office. The request for payment will then be processed in accordance with current policy.

Introduction

VR services may be provided to family members of a participant if necessary to enable the participant to achieve an employment outcome.

The purpose of providing services to family members is to address issues within the family which have a negative impact upon the participant's adjustment or rehabilitation to the extent that they would be unable to begin or continue their IPE or employment would be unnecessarily delayed or could not be achieved

Definition - Family Member

For the purposes of this service, family member means an individual who

1. is a relative or guardian of an applicant or participant; **or**
2. lives in the same household as an applicant or participant, has a substantial interest in the well-being of that individual **and** whose receipt of VR services is necessary to enable the participant to achieve an employment outcome.

Criteria for Provision

To provide services to family members, the services must be

1. provided only to those individuals who meet the definition of family member;
2. planned with the participant, documented in a case note, and entered on the participant's IPE;
3. necessary for the participant to achieve their vocational goal; and
4. unavailable through existing community resources, agencies, or comparable benefits.

Scope of Services

Services to a family member may include any of the VR services available to participants during the VR process.

Examples

Examples of the provision of Services to Family Members:

1. A participant is unable to engage in vocational training (which must begin in July or be delayed indefinitely) because they have no one to care for their two young children while school is out of session. This participant is unable to pay for day care services and is not eligible for temporary assistance. After an unsuccessful search of community resources, the VR counselor has arranged to pay for summer day care thus enabling the participant to participate in the needed training.
2. A participant who has recently become blind due to trauma has applied for VR services and is anxious to develop and implement an IPE. However, the VR process is being delayed because the participant's concern for their spouse who is having difficulty adjusting to the participant's move toward greater independence. Counseling services may be provided to the spouse or to the couple to assist in their adjustment to the participant's efforts toward rehabilitation.

Ending Services to Family Members

Services to family members should end when

1. the service is no longer needed,
2. the service no longer contributes to achievement of the participant's employment outcome, or
3. the participant's case is closed.

Documentation

When services are provided to members of a participant's family, the case record should be documented to include

1. what services are needed,
2. which family member or members need the services, and
3. how the services are expected to contribute to achievement of the participant's employment outcome.

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Economic Need

The provision of services to family members is subject to the same economic need criteria as the provision of services to VR participants. See Chapter 5.00, Determination of Economic Need, for additional information.

Comparable Benefits

Available comparable benefits must be used prior to authorizing services to family members. See Chapter 11.00, Comparable Services and Benefits, for additional information.

Introduction

Reader services include

1. reading and recording class notes for later listening by the participant;
2. recording textbooks or other printed materials;
3. taking notes in classes or other training situations;
4. use of amanuensis during tests or written examinations;
5. use of a laboratory assistant when a participant must participate in laboratory experiments or exercises;
6. reading work-related materials for a participant in an employment setting; and
7. purchase of assistive technology that assists with access to educational material (Example: JAWS software for student to have tests read to them; braille printer to prepare accessible materials; notetaking software and devices, hearing magnification systems such as an FM System or Roger Pen). Personal technology is not part of readers aid supports.

Who Provides Reader Services

Reader services are available through the "Readers' Aid Program" administered by the New York State Education Department Adult Career and Continuing Education Services - Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR).

NYSCB provides reader services as a supplement to the Readers' Aid Program and to participants who are not eligible for services through the Readers' Aid Program. See Section 9.13, Reader Services, for additional information.

Who May Receive Reader Services

Reader services are available to participants who are:

1. engaged in training at a college or university;
2. attending vocational, technical and business schools;
3. in other training situations where significant amounts of reading are essential to the completion of the training program; or
4. have obtained employment where reader services are essential to support the placement. These reader services can only be provided while the participant's case is open.

Criteria for Receiving Reader Services Through the Readers' Aid Program

To receive funds from the Readers' Aid Program, a participant must

1. be a legal resident of New York State;
2. be legally blind (20/200 vision in the better eye with best correction, have; profound hearing loss (70dB or more, or a speech discrimination of less than 70%);
3. be matriculated or actively working to earn a certification through an institution of higher education authorized by law to grant degrees, and if in New York State, approved by the New York State Board of Regents; and
4. be enrolled in a non-degree granting proprietary school in New York State.

Guidelines for Readers' Aid Funds

Readers' Aid funds are limited to a maximum amount of funds per academic year determined by the NYS Education Department. The following procedures or provisions apply to the use of those funds:

1. Readers' Aid funds can only be used for the first five services listed in the Introduction above.
2. Readers' Aid funds cannot be used for tuition, room and board, tutoring, supplies, textbooks or guide services.
3. Readers and notetakers cannot be members of the student's immediate family without requesting and justifying the need for same in writing.
4. Readers are paid by the college or university upon receipt of bills, along with time sheets (available through ACCES-VR), approved by the student.

How to Apply for the Readers' Aid Program

Students must apply **directly** to the college or university for **each** semester for which Readers' Aid is desired. The first application for Readers' Aid must be

1. on the standard application form (available from ACCES-VR),
2. accompanied by a medical eye report from a certified ophthalmologist or certification of legal blindness by NYSCB, and
3. submitted to the school after school registration.

Application Deadlines

Applications for the fall semester must be received at the institution by September 30. Applications for the spring semester must be received at the institution by February 1.

Guidelines for NYSCB Supplemental Reader Funds

NYSCB may provide reader funds to NYSCB participants who are attending college and not otherwise eligible for the Readers' Aid Program (New York State Education Department, NYSED). NYSCB may also supplement the funds provided by the Readers' Aid Program when the VR counselor can demonstrate or document the need for additional reader use or costs beyond that provided by the NYSED.

NYSCB may also provide reader service funds for non-college participants if

1. reader assistance is essential to support training or placement as established on the approved IPE, and
2. there is no viable alternative such as volunteer readers, magnification devices, braille, or large print resources.

NYSCB cannot pay for reader services provided by a member of the participant's family or household, unless requested by the participant, documented as necessary and approved by the senior counselor.

Participant Responsibility

Participants are responsible for

1. locating readers,
2. maintaining time sheets required by NYSCB,
3. utilizing volunteer readers wherever possible,
4. supplementing paid reader services with volunteer resources when needed, and
5. budgeting their reader funds allocation.

Maximum Payment Amounts

1. The total amount of reader funds provided by NYSCB and NYSED to participants attending college should not exceed \$4,000 per academic year. This amount can only be exceeded with senior counselor approval, the decision must be documented in the case record.

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2. NYSCB can provide up to \$4,000 per calendar year of reader services to participants not attending college when reader services are necessary to support training or placement. This amount can only be exceeded with senior counselor approval and case documentation.

Rates Paid to Readers

Hourly rates for reader services will be negotiated on an individual basis by the participant and the reader but should not exceed \$15/hr.

Economic Need

Reader services are not contingent on the participant's economic need status. See Chapter 5.00, Determination of Economic Need, for additional information.

Introduction

Personal assistant services are a range of services, including, training in managing, supervising, and directing personal assistance services provided by one or more persons that are:

1. designed to assist an individual with a disability to perform daily living activities on or off the job that the individual would typically perform without assistance if the individual did not have a disability,
2. designed to increase the individual's control in life and ability to perform everyday activities on or off the job,
3. necessary to the achievement of an employment outcome, and
4. provided only while the individual is receiving other VR services.

Scope of Services

Personal assistance services are provided for participants whose secondary disability(ies) limit their physical functioning and mobility to the degree that a personal assistant is required to enable the participant to achieve an employment outcome. Personal assistance services include but are not limited to assistance with personal hygiene, mobility, eating, dressing, errands and incidental communications.

Personal assistance services can only be provided by NYSCB as a supportive service to another VR service. It can be authorized only when the participant is engaged in another VR service or preparing to access another service. Both the personal care service and the VR service being supported must be entered on the IPE.

Personal assistance services are not intended to supplant the care customarily provided by family members.

Evaluation of Need for Personal Assistance Services

A participant will be evaluated by a physician, occupational therapist, physical therapist or other appropriate professional having the skill and knowledge to determine the participant's personal assistance needs. In some cases, participants may be referred to NYSCB with adequate information concerning their personal assistance needs. If this information is current and sufficiently comprehensive, it may be used in lieu of an evaluation.

Recruiting a Personal Assistant

To provide flexibility and choice in obtaining personal assistance services, NYSCB will inform participants of the availability of Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Programs (CDPAPs). These programs allow participants to recruit, hire, train and supervise their own attendants while a vendor agency handles the administrative tasks and provides training and support to the participant.

Personal assistants may be recruited through the following resources:

1. The participant's informal network of family and friends
2. Local NYSCB district office
3. Local independent living centers
4. Local department of social services
5. Community service organizations
6. Work study programs and personal assistants' referral services at colleges
7. Public and private home health care agencies
8. Waiver programs

Selecting a Personal Assistant

Personal assistants will be selected by the participant and VR counselor based on their ability to fulfill the participant's identified needs, and their rapport with the participant.

Participant and VR Counselor Involvement

Some participants may initially require assistance from their VR counselor for recruiting, training and supervising their attendants. This may be coordinated by the VR counselor with the participant through an independent living center, occupational therapist, physical therapist, disabled students program or other appropriate source.

Participants who have demonstrated the ability to self-direct their personal assistance services should be encouraged to recruit, hire, train and supervise their attendants.

The VR counselor will act as a facilitator, assisting the participant with any problems as well as compliance with NYSCB standards. The participant should notify the VR counselor about any unresolved problems as soon as they occur.

Continuation of Personal Assistance Services During Employment

If needed, a transitional period of up to 90 days of personal assistance services may be provided after employment while arrangements are being made for personal assistance services to continue when NYSCB sponsorship ends.

Termination of Personal Assistance Services

Personal assistance services will be terminated when the service is no longer needed or the participant's case is closed.

Economic Need

Personal assistance services are not contingent on the individual's economic need status. See Chapter 5.00, Determination of Economic Need, for additional information.

Comparable Benefits

Available comparable benefits must be used prior to authorizing personal assistance services. When personal assistance services are provided on an ongoing basis by another resource (i.e. Medicaid) prior to the participant's involvement in VR services, that resource should be considered as a possible comparable benefit. See Chapter 11.00, Comparable Service and Benefits, for additional information

Payment

Payment for personal assistance services may not be made to a member of a participant's family which includes: spouse; parents; stepparents; grandparents; children; and spouses of children.

When a Medicaid provider is used, payment will be the Medicaid provider rate. When a non-Medicaid provider is used, payment will be at the minimum wage.

Minimum wage can be exceeded with senior counselor approval and case documentation indicating that a Medicaid provider or a provider accepting minimum wage cannot be found. However, when an agency or an individual provider is used, payment should not exceed the rate charged to other recipients of their services.

Introduction

Occupational and professional licenses are licenses, permits or other written authority required by a state, city, or other governmental unit to enter an occupation or become self-employed. Occupational and professional licenses are provided as part of the IPE to increase the participant's prospects of employment or self-employment.

Who May Receive An Occupational and Professional License?

Occupational and professional licenses are provided to those participants who require such license to enter employment or self-employment in accordance with their IPE goal.

Prior to developing an IPE with a vocational goal that requires special licensing it is important to first determine if conditions exist that prohibit the participant from obtaining the required license.

Examples

Examples of occupational licenses:

1. Realtor license - purchased after the participant successfully completes a real estate training course and passes the required examinations in the state
2. Food service license - required by either local, county, or state government for the preparation and selling of food
3. License to operate a business for self-employment

Examples of professional licenses:

1. Law - a person must pass the New York State Bar exam before practicing law within the state
2. Registered Nurse - a person must pass the nursing board exam before being qualified to work as a registered nurse
3. Certified Public Accountant - a person must pass the certification exam administered by the State Education Department

Review Courses for Occupational Professional Licensing Exams

Review courses for occupational or professional licensing exams can be provided when the course will enable the participant to review information necessary to pass the exam

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and enter employment in accordance with their IPE goal. Review courses must be provided by a certified program and approved by the district manager.

Payment for Licensing Exams

NYSCB will support three attempts to pass an initial occupational or professional licensing exam. Support can include tuition, fees and necessary adjunct support service costs.

If a participant is unable to pass an occupational or professional licensing exam after three attempts, the VR counselor and participant should discuss alternative employment options. The IPE may need to be changed to reflect a more readily attainable goal. Skills developed during training for the previous IPE goal should be evaluated to determine if they are transferable to an alternative occupation.

Economic Need

Occupational and professional licenses and review courses are contingent on the participant's economic need status. See Chapter 5.00, Determination of Economic Need, for additional information.

Comparable Benefits

Available comparable benefits must be used prior to authorizing occupational or professional license services. See Chapter 11.00, Comparable Services and Benefits, for additional information.