

## 441.00P Vehicle Modification Procedure

See corresponding Vehicle Modification Policy

**Note: Vocational Rehabilitation procedures provide internal guidance for ACCES-VR staff only and create no procedural or substantive rights for any individual or group.**

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### Description/Definitions

Vehicle Modification is a service provided under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for an ACCES-VR eligible individual who owns\*, or has the use of, an appropriate vehicle. The vehicle must have a current inspection sticker, must be structurally sound, and not in need of repairs. The individual must require vehicle modification services to drive, or to ride as a passenger, in order to meet his or her employment outcome. The vehicle must be able to receive the modification and equipment necessary for the individual's specific driving or transportation needs.

**Note: It is not a requirement for an individual to own a vehicle prior to the initiation of vehicle modification services.**

The individual, as the driver, is expected to have a current valid driver's license that lists restrictions related to their disability; if the license was obtained prior to onset of disability, the individual must obtain an updated license which list the individual's restrictions.

### Referral

When referring an individual to a Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator and/or the Driver Rehabilitation Consultant for vehicle modification assessment, the ACCES-VR's referral package should include current medical and when necessary, psychological information that accurately describes the individual's functional limitations.

## **Record of Service - Considerations in the Vehicle Modification Process**

For vehicle modification services, the VR counselor will discuss with the individual the need to participate in a driver evaluation as well as the need to consult with the Driver Rehabilitation Consultant (DRC) **before purchasing a vehicle**. The VR counselor will document this discussion in the record of service Case Note. ACCES-VR staff will forward referral information by either e-mail or fax to the DRC once it appears that vehicle modification is a needed service.

After the driver evaluation is completed a report will be generated by the Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator (the Vehicle Modifications and Equipment Recommendations Report). This report is reviewed with the individual and a copy is put into the record of service. This report provides the Evaluator's vehicle modification recommendations, including the specific factory installed automobile equipment. The VR counselor can use the report to help the individual select an appropriate vehicle.

The driver evaluation process assists the individual in the selection of the appropriate vehicle. The VR counselor helps the individual understand that not all vehicles are capable of receiving modifications. A report will be generated by the Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator that includes the Vehicle Modifications and Equipment Recommendations Report. A copy of this report is reviewed with consumer and then filed into the consumer record of service. This form provides the vehicle modification recommendations, and specifies recommended factory installed automobile equipment. The individual is responsible for the purchase of a vehicle that includes the specific automobile equipment, while ACCES-VR provides the vehicle modifications.

**Service Justification** - The record of service must document the need for vehicle modification services for the individual to achieve their training/employment goal, i.e. that public transportation is not consistently available, accessible, or reliable. The provision of vehicle modification services should preclude the need for on-going special transportation. The IPE Development Note and the driver rehabilitation evaluation report should reflect the need for this service and be documented in the record of service.

**Financial Need Review** - A financial need review is required for vehicle modification services. The review will determine whether the individual must contribute to the cost of service. The VR Counselor must document the financial review, including exploration of comparable benefits in the record of service.

The VR counselor will discuss with the individual, and document in the record of service, the individual's responsibility to purchase and pay for the costs of operating a vehicle, including insurance, maintenance and repair of the vehicle and modification. The VR counselor will also obtain the individual's signature on the Vehicle Modification Fact Sheet. The VR counselor will review with the individual, the option of a PASS plan, and setting aside earnings for maintenance, operation, and future vehicle purchases.

**Rebates** - Most major automobile manufacturers have a rebate program that reimburses a portion of modification equipment cost. It is the responsibility of the

individual to apply for rebates and assign rebates to ACCES-VR to offset the cost of the modification.

## **Service Providers**

The process of modifying a vehicle involves a substantial investment on the part of both the individual and ACCES-VR. To facilitate this process ACCES-VR has contracted with vehicle modification vendors, Driver Rehabilitation Evaluators and the Driver Rehabilitation Consultant to provide specific services necessary for the vehicle modification. Each provides services under the overall coordination and direction of the VR counselor. Both a driver evaluation and an initial assessment by the Driver Rehabilitation Consultant are required before providing any vehicle modification service.

### **The Role of the Vehicle Modification Vendor**

The role of the Vehicle Modification Vendor is to provide vehicle modification in accordance with the bid specification(s). ACCES-VR uses Vehicle Modification Vendors approved under the Quality Assurance Program (QAP) of the National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association (NMEDA).

### **The Role of the Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator**

The Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator is an ACCES-VR vendor who is specially trained and is able to:

- assess whether an individual has potential to drive a vehicle safely;
- determine the individual's training needs;
- provide driver rehabilitation training and/or education so that the individual is able to obtain or retain a driver's license;
- determine if and what type of vehicle modifications, adaptive equipment or automotive equipment are necessary;
- provide a Vehicle Modifications and Equipment Recommendations Report to the ACCES-VR Counselor. This evaluation report provides the recommendations for modification and identifies the vehicle class (i.e. van, sedan, multi-purpose vehicle) capable of accepting the required modification.

The VR counselor keeps the Vehicle Modifications and Recommendations Equipment Report as part of the record of service and provides a copy of the report to the DRC. The DRC uses this report to develop the specifications for bids solicitation. The report is valid for one year from the date of the driver evaluation, or six months in the case of individuals with progressive disabilities.

### **The Role of the Driver Rehabilitation Consultant**

The Driver Rehabilitation Consultant (DRC) is engaged by ACCES-VR whenever ACCES-VR is providing vehicle modification service. The DRC meets with the individual (by phone or in person), to conduct an initial assessment. Later on, the DRC reviews

the Vehicle Modifications and Equipment Recommendations Report to ensure the recommendations meet the individual's needs and comply with ACCES-VR's Standards for Automotive Adaptive Equipment. The ACCES-VR counselor may involve the DRC prior to, or concurrently with, a referral to a Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator.

The DRC:

- conducts an initial assessment;
- provides technical assistance throughout the vehicle modification process;
- reviews the Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator's Vehicle Modifications and Equipment Recommendations Report;
- provides the individual with information to promote informed choice for vehicle selection;
- consults with the VR counselor and individual on the Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator's report to assure that the recommended equipment and related vehicle modification are necessary and appropriate for the individual to drive safely;
- provides the district office with bid specifications based on the Vehicle Modifications and Equipment Recommendations Report; and
- conducts a Final Review upon completion of the vehicle modification. The Final Review includes two components: (1) a complete inspection of the modification and adaptive equipment and (2) an assessment of the individual's ability to properly operate the modified vehicle.

### **Types of Initial Assessments**

The DRC provides two distinct types of initial assessments related to vehicle modifications: assessment for low technology modifications and assessment for high technology modifications.

#### **Initial Assessment for Low Technology Modification**

An assessment for low technology modification (Case Service Code 135X) includes vehicle modifications, assistive technology and automotive equipment for an individual who is the driver who transfers into the drivers' seat or who is passenger. Examples of low technology modifications for the driver include, but are not limited to: primary driving controls such as manual gas/brake hand controls; left foot accelerator pedal; park brake lever or stand alone powered parking brake; steering terminal device; raised tops and/or doors, mechanical hand controls and steering devices, six-way power transfer seats, car-top carriers, wheelchair lifters/loaders.

#### **Initial Assessment for High Technology Modification**

An assessment for high technology modifications (Case Service Code 136X) includes modifications, assistive technology and automotive equipment to accommodate a driver in a van, alterations to major structural components of a vehicle such as lowered floor and/or installation of high technology primary driving systems such as devices capable of controlling vehicle functions or driving controls; devices that operate with a designed

logic system or interface or integrate with an electronic system of the vehicle. Examples of high technology modifications include, but are not limited to: lowered floors on a van; powered gas/brake systems; reduced effort steering system; horizontal steering system; and reduced effort brake systems.

### **Final Review of Vehicle Modification**

At the **completion** of the vehicle modification the DRC conducts a Final Review of the vehicle modification (Case Service Code 855X - final review of low tech modification; Case Service Code 856X – final review of high tech modification).

The Final Review has two components generally done at the same time:

- An inspection of the vehicle modification, equipment and its installation; and
- A performance assessment of the individual's ability to use the modifications.

### **Vehicle Equipment Inspection Report**

Upon completion of the Final Review, the DRC submits a Consultant Final Review and Vehicle Equipment Report to ACCES-VR that certifies the vehicle has passed inspection and is in compliance with installation and safety standards. If the vehicle fails inspection, the report will identify the deficiencies and make recommendations for correction before re-inspection. The report certifies that the warranty and registration of the equipment are completed and that all equipment manuals have been given to the individual. The report also identifies cost adjustment due to equipment substitution and/or installation labor charges. The inspection report must be completed and submitted to ACCES-VR prior to payment. A copy of this report is placed in the record of service.

### **Performance Assessment**

Each individual (as either the driver or the passenger) is required to participate in the performance assessment and must demonstrate proficiency in the use of the modifications. The performance assessment ensures that all the adaptive equipment and modification meet the individual's functional needs to operate the vehicle safely. The performance assessment may identify additional training needs. The DRC will provide both ACCES-VR and the individual with a *Receipt/Performance Assessment Report* before releasing the vehicle to the individual. When both the modification inspection and the performance assessment are passed, the vehicle is released.

### **Releasing the Vehicle After Failed Performance Assessment – Documentation Requirements**

If performance assessment is failed, the DRC identifies the findings and deficiencies in the *Receipt/Performance Assessment Report* and notifies the ACCES VR counselor and the Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator.

If the individual insists on the release of the vehicle before passing the performance assessment, the DRC notifies the individual and ACCES-VR, in writing, that the vehicle is being released for passenger-use only and the individual is not approved to drive the vehicle.

ACCES-VR must then get a written statement from the individual acknowledging that the individual:

1. Was informed of the failed performance assessment and is taking the vehicle for passenger use only; and
2. Assumes all financial responsibility if they operate the vehicle against the ACCES-VR and the DRCs' recommendation; and
3. Acknowledges that ACCES-VR is not responsible for the replacement or repair of damages incurred as a result of operating the vehicle before being approved to do so; and
4. Acknowledges that ACCES-VR is not responsible for damages or injury to a third party.

When the vehicle modification inspection is passed in the Final Review, but the individual fails the performance assessment ACCES-VR will pay the vehicle modifier for completion of the vehicle modification.

### **Used Vehicles and Previously Modified Vehicles**

An individual may sometimes seek to purchase a (1) a used vehicle without modification or (2) a used vehicle that has been previously modified. The used vehicle must be able to accommodate the individual's unique modification needs. A used vehicle must be structurally and mechanically sound and not in need of mechanical repair. A Department of Motor Vehicle licensed garage can determine whether the vehicle is structurally and mechanically sound. This determination must be done prior to the vehicle purchase.

The DRC will determine whether the used vehicle can accept the modifications in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines. Because the manufacturers of vehicle modification and adaptive equipment have strict installation and compliance standards for the equipment, an older or used vehicle may not be able to accept the modification by the manufacturer.

When an individual considers the purchase of a used previously modified vehicle the existing modifications must meet the individual's functional needs as determined by the Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator and the modifications must be in good working condition, as determined by DRC. In this case, ACCES-VR may pay for the equipment on a previously modified vehicle after the DRC assesses the equipment to determine that the modification (which includes assessing both the equipment and the installation of the equipment) meet Standards for Automotive Adaptive Equipment, and is compatible for the safety and modification needs of the individual. The DRC must inspect, evaluate

and appraise the value of all modifications on used vehicles prior to ACCES-VR agreeing to purchase such for an individual's use.

Used equipment that is not installed in a vehicle will not be considered for purchase.

ACCES-VR will pro-rate the payment for used equipment and establish a reimbursable amount for the purchase of only the equipment needed by the individual, as determined by the DRC.

## **Bids and Quotes**

Once the bid specifications have been received, reviewed and agreed to by the individual, ACCES-VR will start the bidding process.

Although the DRC prepares the bid specification, it is the responsibility of ACCES-VR to manage the bid process. When ACCES-VR solicits bids, a copy of the Vehicle Modifications and Equipment Recommendations Report must be part of the bid package.

When awarding a modification contract, ACCES-VR will assure that the vendor selected has the ability to provide all warranty services in a timely manner and without additional cost to the individual or to ACCES-VR.

## **Waiver**

A waiver is required in cases where it has been determined by the Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator that an individual who uses a manual wheelchair and who can safely transfer into and drive a modified car, requests a van modification rather than a car modification.

## **Summary**

**Vehicle Modification Process:** The following summary is intended to outline the major steps, roles and forms in the vehicle modification process. *The sequence of steps may vary slightly depending on the individual's need.* Below is an outline of the vehicle modification process:

1. The ACCES-VR Counselor and the individual discuss the transportation needs as either the driver/passenger, vehicle availability, and review the Vehicle Modification Fact Sheet (VR-441). Before a vehicle is modified, the vehicle's owner must sign a Vehicle Availability Agreement (VR-730). This must be completed prior to the driver evaluation. The VR counselor justifies the need for vehicle modification services and documents it in the record of service case note. The VR counselor: maintains contact with the individual to coordinate services; obtains required approval; makes final decision regarding vehicle modification services; and generates the authorization for service. The VR counselor makes the referral to the Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator and the DRC. The referral

information includes updated medical information describing the individual's current functional limitations and whether the individual has a progressive disability. This information and a copy of Vehicle Modification and Equipment Recommendations Report are provided to the DRC.

**Forms:** The ACCES-VR Vehicle Modification Fact Sheet; Vehicle Availability Agreement; Used Vehicle Inspection (for used vehicles); Driver Referral; and Vehicle Modification and Equipment Recommendations Report.

2. Driver Rehabilitation Evaluation – Driver Evaluation, and training when necessary, is required prior to modifying a vehicle. Vehicle modification is only done after the individual has completed or is near completion of driver training, and the individual has obtained a motor vehicle license that lists the appropriate restrictions for the operation of a motor vehicle. When the evaluation is completed, the Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator sends an evaluation report that includes vehicle modification and equipment recommendations to ACCES-VR.

**Reports and Forms:** Driver/Vehicle Evaluation Report VR-731: Vehicle Equipment Inspection Report; Vehicle Factory Consultation Report; Vehicle Modification and Equipment Recommendations Report; Receipt/Performance Assessment Report.

3. The DRC performs the initial and final vehicle modification inspections; provides the performance assessment of the individual; the initial assessment may be done concurrently with Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator referral.

**Reports:** Consultant Final Review and Vehicle Equipment Report; Bid Specifications Sheet.

4. The individual completes Adaptive Driver Training and acquires a driver license with restrictions.
5. The Individual, the ACCES- VR counselor, and the DRC hold a review session for all high technology modification to discuss the individual's needs and the Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator report prior to the DRC developing bid specifications.
6. Development of Bid Specifications - the DRC develops bid specifications for the vehicle modification, identifies qualified contract vendors, and provides this information to the District Office Business Manager who then solicits bids.
7. The Business Manager conducts the bid opening at the District Office, and should receive three qualified responses; if there are only two bid responses, the Business Manager will request a composite third bid from the DRC as a part of the bid review.
8. Bid Review. The DRC reviews bid for responsiveness to specifications and may provide composite bid as necessary. The DRC will submit a bid review report to the District Office (DO).
9. The VR Counselor develops the IPE case note documenting specific information such as the chosen vendor, planned need for the service leading to an

employment outcome, justifications, and any additional details necessary to provide the service.

10. **Business Manager** - the DO awards and authorizes the services to the lowest responsive bidder for bids under \$15,000. Bids of \$15,000 or more are to be sent to Fiscal and Administrative Services Team (FAST) at Central Office for preliminary review. The FAST Unit will send bids of \$50,000 or more to the Office of State Comptroller. The FAST Unit will notify the DO when approval is granted.
11. Business Office Manager - issues AV to contract vendor.
12. The DRC monitors the progress of the modifications and addresses any technical issues that may arise and consults with the VR counselor as necessary.
13. The Vehicle Modification Vendor provides two week advance notification of pending modification completion to the DRC to arrange Final Inspection.
14. The DRC conducts the Final Review that includes the vehicle modification inspection and performance assessment. A deficiency report is issued when vehicle does not pass inspection; the vehicle is not released. When the vehicle inspection is passed, but the individual is unable to operate it, the vehicle is released for passenger use only, with a recommendation for additional training. When the Final Review is satisfactory, the vehicle is released to the individual.

#### Vehicle Modification Case Service Codes

Code	Description
133X	Adaptive Driver Evaluation –Low Tech- car or van
134X	Adaptive Driver Evaluation –High Tech- car or van
135X	Consultant Initial Assessment (Low Tech) - includes review of referral information from ACCES-VR, including any Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator Recommendations. Consultant will minimally have phone contact with the individual. Consultant will provide written report to ACCES-VR to enable bid/purchase of appropriate modifications for the individual or referral to DRS as appropriate to individual's needs. Payable at time of assessment.
136X	Consultant Initial Assessment (High Tech) - includes review of referral information from ACCES-VR, including any Driver Rehabilitation Evaluator Recommendations. Consultant will conduct a face-to-face meeting with individual to discuss needs/available recommendations. Consultant will provide written report to ACCES-VR that will either result in referral to DRS or the actual generation of bids specifications for the modifications depending on the needs of the individual. Reviews bids responses for specification compliance prior to award.
142X	Travel for Evaluation - paid to prior approved vendors for travel over 20 miles. Hourly rate.
850X	Van Modifications

860X	Car Modifications
855X	Consultant Final Assessment (Low Tech) - includes any required consultation during the modification bid/purchase/installation process. Includes final inspection of adaptive equipment/vehicle to insure all standards are met as well as a performance assessment with the individual utilizing the equipment and demonstrating competence and safe operation.
856X	Consultant Final Assessment (High Tech) - includes any consultation during the modification bid/purchase/installation process. Includes final inspection of modifications/vehicle to insure all standards are met as well as a performance assessment with the individual utilizing the equipment and demonstrating competence and safe operation.