I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to provide direction for vehicle modification in accordance with appropriate federal (e.g. Code of Federal Regulations [CFR]) and state law (i.e. Ohio Revised Code [ORC], Ohio Administrative Code [OAC]) Governor directives and executive orders, other governing agency (e.g. DAS, OBM) policy or guidance, and/or Director expectations.

Refer to the Vocational Rehabilitation Vehicle Modification Manual for requirements and instruction for retail dealers and individuals.

II. APPLICABILITY

This procedure applies to VR Staff and VR Contractors.

III. DEFINITIONS

Refer to “Vocational Rehabilitation Definitions” (80-VR-99.A).

Automotive Adaptive Equipment – any device, mechanism, or equipment designed to enable an individual with a disability to operate a passenger car.

Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist (CDRS) – a person who has obtained the necessary knowledge base and experience in the field of driver rehabilitation to successfully acquire and maintain certification to measure a person's ability to safely operate a vehicle, teach that individual to operate the equipment, and prescribe or specify the automotive adaptive equipment necessary to permit an individual with a disability to drive safely and independently.

Driver Rehabilitation Specialist (DRS) – a person certified by The Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists or its equivalent, or a driver rehabilitation specialist supervised by a CDRS, who measures a person's ability to safely operate a vehicle, teaches that individual to operate the equipment, and prescribes or specifies the automotive adaptive equipment necessary to permit an individual with a disability to drive safely and independently.
Formal Recommendation – a Vehicle Modification Specification provided by a CDRS, or DRS that includes specific recommendations for a vehicle modification.

Retail Dealer – a business who modifies or facilitates modification of a vehicle for an individual with a disability.

OOD Designee – for the purpose of this procedure, a designated VR Staff responsible for review and approval of all vehicle modifications.

Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) – means the original automotive manufacturer producing the vehicle such as Ford, General Motors, and Fiat Chrysler.

Passenger Car - any motor vehicle that is designed and used for carrying not more than nine (9) persons and includes any motor vehicle that is designed and used for carrying not more than 15 persons in a ridesharing arrangement.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. General

1. OOD shall provide information to individuals and if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, throughout the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) process as required by law (e.g. rights and duties). This information shall be provided, in writing, and when appropriate, in the individual’s native language or through an appropriate mode of communication.

2. AWARE shall be updated with pertinent conversations, recommendations, justifications, approvals and/or other actions taken in relation to this procedure.

   a. If supervisory or management approval is required during the VR process, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall, via a “Custom Activity Due” in AWARE, request approval which shall include a written justification.

   b. The supervisor or manager shall consider the VR Staff or VR Contractors’ justification and document his/her approval or denial within the “Activity Due” as detailed below.

      i. If approval is based on the written justification, the supervisor/manager shall enter “Approved” in the “Comments” and change the activity status to “Completed.”

      ii. If approval is based on the written justification but additional conditions/requirements need to be addressed before VR Staff or VR Contractor can take action on the approval; the supervisor/manager shall enter “Approved with Conditions” and document the conditions/requirements in the “Comments” and change the activity status to “Completed.”

      iii. If denied, the supervisor/manager does not agree with the justification, they shall enter the words “Request Denied,” and document the reason(s) for denial in the “Comments” and change the activity status to “Completed.”

3. If any VR Staff or VR Contractors are a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC-certified) and will be directly involved with an individual’s case, they shall complete the “Professional Disclosure Statement” (80-VR-01.E).

   a. VR Staff or VR Contractors who are not a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) are exempt from this requirement.
b. Once completed, the “Professional Disclosure Statement” shall be reviewed and signed by the individual and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, and the CRC-certified VR Staff or VR Contractor.

i. Once signed, the statement shall be scanned into the AWARE Participant Module, as a Case Note, with the category “Professional Disclosure Statement” and summary title “Signed.”

4. If, at any time during the VR process, an individual, or if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, wishes for someone other than their parent or legal guardian to take part in any step of the process or if additional records and/or assessments are needed (e.g. medical records), a “Consent to Obtain and Release Information” form (80-VR-14.A) must be completed and signed for each person/entity and submitted to OOD.

a. If, at any time during the VR process, an individual, or if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, wishes to withdrawal consent from any person or entity listed on their application or a completed consent, a “Withdrawal of Consent” form (80-VR-14.B) must be completed, signed, and submitted to OOD.

5. “Transition Services” (80-VR-11-12) shall be followed for additional guidance and direction regarding vehicle modification for students with a disability enrolled in a secondary educational institution.

6. OOD shall not purchase a vehicle in whole or in part but may purchase automotive adaptive equipment and motor vehicle modifications in whole or part, for an individual as long as the vehicle is titled to the individual, parent or legal guardian, spouse, and/or sibling. In addition, the following conditions must be present:

a. personal transportation is required to meet the employment outcome specified on the individual’s individualized plan for employment (IPE) (refer to “IPE” [80-VR-08-01]); and

b. other modes of transportation (e.g. public transportation) that would enable the individual to effectively meet the employment outcome as stated in their IPE are not available.

B. Requirements for Vehicles and Planning Discussions

1. OOD shall not purchase a new or used vehicle, in whole or in part, for an individual nor shall OOD pay for any required repairs on a vehicle purchased for the purpose of a vehicle modification.

2. Vehicle modifications may only be provided to an individual actively involved in VR services (i.e. either participating in services, ready for employment, or currently employed) and shall only be considered when it is more cost effective and/or more efficient than the purchase of public or any other mode of transportation per the “Transportation” procedure (80-VR-11-11).

3. For the purposes of this procedure, vehicle modification only applies to passenger cars (i.e. car or van) which must meet, at a minimum, the requirements list below.
a. Vehicles allowed for structural modification are:
   
   i. Chrysler Pacifica;
   ii. Dodge Caravan;
   iii. Honda Odyssey;
   iv. Toyota Sienna; and
   v. others, as allowed by OOD.

b. An acceptable vehicle shall be new or if used, has mileage under 36,000, is under 3 years old and must still be under the original manufacturer’s warranty.

   a. If the vehicle is used, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall require that the individual provides an inspection report from an ASE certified mechanic that is independent of the seller prior to modification.

   i. The mechanic must complete the “Vehicle Inspection Form” (80-VR-25-01.A) and the vehicle must be in “sound condition”.

c. OOD will not purchase vehicle options that are included as “standard” or other options for the vehicle (e.g. back-up camera, remote car starter).

4. VR Staff or VR Contractors and the individual and if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, spouse, and/or sibling shall discuss the vehicle modification process using the “Vehicle Modification Acknowledgement” (80-VR-25-01.B).

   a. The individual and if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, spouse, and/or sibling should not purchase a vehicle with the expectation that OOD will approve a modification prior to all requirements of this procedure being completed including obtaining the modification quotation(s), awarding the project and completing/signing the “Vehicle Modification Agreement” (80-VR-25-01.C).

   b. If the individual and if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, spouse, and/or sibling wishes to purchase a used vehicle, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall ensure that they understand that the requirements provided above in relation to a used vehicle are met.

   c. The vehicle which the individual, or if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, spouse, and/or sibling is planning on purchasing and the modifications that will be required.

   d. The available retail dealer that can make the modifications.

   e. The timeframe for completion of the modification.

   f. If, at any during the process, the individual and if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, spouse, and/ or sibling wants to change the approved vehicle, the VR Staff or VR Contractor must consult with the OOD Designee by sending an e-mail to ood.rehabtech@ood.ohio.gov.

C. Adaptive Driver Evaluation and License and Driver Training

   1. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall review all proposed vehicle modifications with their VR or Contract Supervisor prior to authorizing for a driver evaluation in AWARE.
2. If the VR Supervisor agrees to move forward with exploring the feasibility of a vehicle modification, a driver evaluation is required to document the individual’s needs and ability to operate a motor vehicle.

   a. The driver evaluation may be conducted as part of the Comprehensive Assessment (CA) process as outlined in “Comprehensive Assessment” (80-VR-04-01) or later in the VR process (e.g. as the individual is approaching readiness for the modification).

   b. The evaluation shall be completed by a Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist (CDRS) or Driver Rehabilitation Specialist (DRS). A listing may be found on the Association of Driving Rehabilitation Specialist website (https://www.aded.net/) under the “Directory & Services” section.

      i. Prior to the evaluation, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall contact the CDRS/DRS to determine if a prescription is needed from the individual’s treating physician for participation in the driver evaluation.

         a) A prescription, if required, should include the relevant diagnosis and any other requirements deemed necessary by the CDRS/DRS.

         b) If necessary, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall work with the individual and if applicable, their parent or legal guardian and/or the treating physician to obtain the prescription.

      ii. OOD may require the CDRS/DRS to utilize the “Vehicle Modification Specification” form (80-VR-25-01.D) to document their evaluation.

   c. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall ask the CDRS/DRS if the individual requires a driver permit in order to complete the evaluation if they do not currently possess a valid driver license.

      i. VR Staff or VR Contractor shall follow “Transportation” (80-VR-11-11) if the individual needs to obtain a driver permit to participate in a driver evaluation.

   d. If the individual does not possess a valid driver license with the proper endorsements, the CDRS/DRS may recommend driver rehabilitation training (DRT) for the individual to obtain or update their driver license.

      i. If DRT is recommended, the VR Staff or VR Contractor shall add DRT to the individual’s IPE which shall include an estimate of time for completion, based on recommendations from the CDRS.

   e. The submission of the “Vehicle Modification Specification” by the CDRS/DRS certifies the individual’s driver competency that the individual possesses a valid driver license with proper endorsements.

      i. The "Vehicle Modification Specification" certifies driver competency for 12 months.

   f. If the CDRS/DRS does not recommend that the individual drive (and therefore does not recommend DRT), VR Staff or VR Contractor and the individual and if applicable, their parent or legal guardian shall explore other transportation options. The Vehicle Modification process discussion stops at this point.
D. Review of Proposed Modification(s), Obtaining Quotations, Award of the Project, Issuing Authorization, and Final Fitting (Refer to Section D. for Minor Modifications)

1. Once the discussion with the individual, and if applicable their parent or legal guardian, spouse, and/or sibling has been completed, VR Staff or VR Contractor shall request a review of all proposed modifications (including minor modifications, refer to Section E.) by sending an email to ood.rehabtech@ood.ohio.gov for review by the OOD Designee.
   a. The email shall include details of the proposed modifications and the year, make and model of the proposed vehicle.
   b. A copy of the email shall be placed in an AWARE Case Note.
   c. Vehicle modification information shall NOT be added to the Individualize Plan for Employment (IPE) prior to award to the retail dealer.

2. Once the OOD Designee reviews the email, determines all required information is documented in the AWARE Case Record, and all requirements are met, they shall proceed as detailed below.
   a. Complete the “Vehicle Modification Request for Quotation” form (80-VR-25-01.E) and send to the three (3) qualified modification retail dealers selected by the individual, and if applicable their parent or legal guardian, spouse, or sibling.
      a. Quotations may not be required for minor vehicle modifications per “Vocational Rehabilitation Purchases” (40-FIN-01-06). If this is the case, the individual and, if applicable, their parent or legal guardian, spouse, and/or sibling shall choose a vehicle modification retail dealer and VR Staff or VR Contractor shall inform the OOD Designee, via email, which supplier was chosen.
      b. Upon return of the quotations, review and award the modification based on the primary factor of lowest cost, but also secondary factors of shortest distance from the individual’s residence and fastest projected completion time.
   b. The OOD Designee shall complete the “Vehicle Modification Bid Summary” (80-VR-25-01.F). Once completed:
      a. scan into an AWARE Case Note;
      b. send, via email, to the VR Staff or VR Contractor who submitted the request; and
      c. send to the retail dealer(s) who submitted the quotation(s).

3. The VR Staff or VR Contractor shall proceed as detailed below.
   a. Complete the “Vehicle Modification Agreement” (80-VR-25-01.C) and obtain the individual’s signature and date and if applicable, the signature and date of their parent or legal guardian, spouse, and/or sibling.
   b. Once the vehicle has been purchased, obtain copies of the following items and scan into an AWARE Case Note:
      i. the individual’s proof of insurance for the vehicle being modified;
ii. the vehicle title or registration; and

iii. the individual's driver license with endorsements.

c. Add the vehicle modification information to the IPE.

d. Create an AWARE authorization to the retail dealer who was awarded the project per instruction in “Vocational Rehabilitation Purchases (40-FIN-01-06).

   a. Payment shall not be released until the modification and final fitting are completed following guidance in “Submission, Review, and Payment of AWARE Case Services Invoices” (40-FIN-02-02).

4. The CDRS/DRS should, if at all possible, attend the final fitting of the vehicle.

E. Minor Vehicle Modifications

1. Minor modifications shall be listed on the IPE prior to authorizing the services as stated in Section F.2.

2. “Vocational Rehabilitation Purchases” (40-FIN-01-06) shall be followed to determine if verbal or written quotations are required based on the proposed cost.

3. Minor modifications include:
   a. manual hand/foot controls;
   b. pedal guards;
   c. left foot accelerator;
   d. mirrors;
   e. remote switches;
   f. unoccupied wheelchair/scooter handling device;
   g. spinner knobs;
   h. simple extension modifications of secondary controls that allow an individual to grasp, pull, twist, or activate control functions, wheelchair carriers, pedal extensions, shift levers, park brake, turn signals, hazard lights, washer/wiper, ignition, lights, dimmer, seat adjustment, HVAC controls, and door locks; and
   i. similar items which may be considered by the OOD Designee on a case by case basis.

4. OOD is not required to consider the age of the vehicle or mileage limits when an initial request is made for minor modifications to a vehicle.

5. The length of time between OOD authorizing for minor modifications follows the ten (10) years or after the vehicle accumulates 100,000 miles from the date the retail dealer submits the final invoice for payment to OOD, if previously modified.
F. Replacement Vehicle Modifications

1. An individual is eligible to receive a replacement vehicle modification provided by OOD after ten (10) years from the date the retail dealer submits the final invoice for payment to OOD or after the vehicle accumulates 100,000 miles.

   a. The replacement modification must be necessary to enable an individual to maintain the employment outcome as defined in the individual’s IPE.

   b. In its discretion, OOD may grant an exception to the time and accumulated miles requirements and fund vehicle modifications in the following situations;

      i. the individual is currently competitively employed, as defined in 34 C.F.R. 361.5(b)(11); and

      ii. the individual experiences a deterioration of function due to a disability such that the individual is no longer able to safely drive or be transported with the provided level of adaptive driving technology; or

      iii. the individual experiences an additional disability, such that the individual is no longer able to safely drive or be transported using the provided modification; or

      iv. when the high-tech driving system manufacturer recommends a safety upgrade to the driving system and the high-tech integrated driving system is out of warranty.

         a) The warranty had to have been maintained through appropriate maintenance prior to the expiration.

G. Violation

An employee who violates this procedure may be subject to discipline up to and including removal.

FORMS AND ATTACHMENTS

- 80-VR-25-01.A – Vehicle Inspection Form
- 80-VR-25-01.B – Vehicle Modification Acknowledgement
- 80-VR-25-01.C – Vehicle Modification Agreement
- 80-VR-25-01.F – Vehicle Modification Bid Summary

RESOURCES

- VR Vehicle Modification Manual
- 80-VR-99.A – Vocational Rehabilitation Definitions
- 80-VR-01.E – Professional Disclosure Statement
- 80-VR-14.A – Consent to Obtain and Release Information
- 80-VR-11-12 – Transition Services
- 80-VR-11-11 – Transportation
- 80-VR-04-01 – Comprehensive Assessment
- 80-VR-08 and 80-VR-08-01 – Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)
- 40-FIN-01-06 – Vocational Rehabilitation Purchases
- 40-FIN-02-02 – Submission, Review, and Payment of AWARE Case Services Invoices
FUNDING

Programs provided by Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) are funded, in whole or in part, with federal grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

For purposes of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), OOD received 78.7% of its funding through the DOE VR grant. In Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2020, OOD received $103,332,949 in federal funds. Funds appropriated by the State covered 21.3% of the total costs, or $27,966,859. Of these federal funds, $15,499,942 is set aside for Pre-ETS.

For purposes of the Supported Employment (SE) Program, the DOE SE grant funded 90% of the costs for the Supported Employment for Youth with a Disability Program up to the grant amount and 100% of the costs of regular Supported Employment program costs up to the grant amount. In FFY 2020, OOD received $369,584 for SE Youth with a Disability and State appropriated funds paid a small amount more than the remaining 10% or $41,065 of the total costs. In FFY 2020, OOD received $369,584 in regular SE grant funds.

For purposes of the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB) Program, the federal grant received from DOE in FFY 2020 paid 90% of the total costs incurred under the program. In FFY 2020, OOD received $1,148,413 in federal grant funds. Funds appropriated by the State paid over the 10% required match or $127,601 of the total costs incurred under the OIB program.

For purposes of the Independent Living (IL) Program, the federal grant received from HHS paid 90% of the total costs incurred in FFY 2020. In FFY 2020, OOD received funding of $641,721. Funds appropriated by the State paid 10% or $71,302 of the total costs incurred under the IL Program.

REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the Deputy Director, or designee, to review this procedure, on or before, the date listed in the header and if applicable, make any necessary revisions. The Deputy Director or designee shall document the review as required in “Policy and Procedure Process” (10-ADM-01).