# VR-SFP Chapter 5: Orientation and Mobility Services

The following sections of the VR Standards for Providers have been revised. These requirements will take effect July 1, 2021.

## 5.1 Overview of Orientation and Mobility Services

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) services prepare blind and visually impaired customers to travel independently with competence and confidence.

O&M specialists offer complex, interrelated services designed to develop independent travel skills in individuals who are blind or visually impaired. O&M services begin with an assessment and can include training held in environments frequently visited by customers.

Orientation is the process of using the available senses to establish one's position and relationship within the environment.

Mobility is the ability to travel in the environment with the help of an established tool (including white canes, dog guides, and electronic travel aids).

O&M assessments and training can be provided in locations within the customer's home or community. O&M assessments and training are provided in person and cannot be provided remotely.

Examples of training locations include:

* the customer's home (indoor and outdoor);
* public areas, such as a bank, church, or doctor's office;
* commercial areas, such as a grocery store or mall;
* transit systems, such as public transportation, paratransit, and taxis;
* rural areas;
* residential areas (with light traffic and stop signs);
* small business areas (with heavier traffic and simple traffic lights);
* downtown areas (with heavy traffic and complex traffic lights); and
* commercial modes of travel, such as trains and planes.

When the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or the federal, state, or local government issues health and safety protocols, such as social distancing, follow VR-SFP 3.3.10 Contractor Required Policy and Procedures.Any request to change a Service Definition, Process and Procedure, or Outcomes Required for Payment must be documented and approved by the VR director, using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) for Blind and Visually Impaired Services form, before the change is implemented. The approved VR3472 must be maintained in the provider’s customer case file. For more information refer to [VR-SFP 3.6.4.2 Evaluation of Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03#s3-6-4).

For information on acceptable signatures refer to [VR-SFP 3.11.1 Documentation and Signatures](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03#s3-11-1).

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## 5.3 Orientation and Mobility Assessment

### 5.3.1 Orientation and Mobility Assessment Service Description

The assessment includes an evaluation of the customer's O&M skills in multiple situations in person and cannot be conducted remotely.

Assessments may be conducted using the customer's functional vision. Functional vision refers to the way in which an individual uses whatever vision he or she has in a given travel situation. Assessments provide an opportunity for customers to recognize that their vision might not meet all their travel needs.

Locations for assessments include a combination of:

* the customer's home and immediate surrounding area;
* public areas, such as a church, park, or college campus;
* commercial areas, such as a bank, store, or mall;
* transit systems, such as paratransit or taxis (if available);
* local buses and similar public transportation (if available);
* rural areas (if applicable);
* residential areas (those with light vehicle and foot traffic and some stop signs);
* small business areas (those with heavier traffic and simple traffic lights);
* downtown areas (those with heavy vehicle and foot traffic and complex traffic lights);
* commercial transportation systems, such as buses, trains, and airplanes (if applicable); and
* travel using low-vision devices (if applicable).

For Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) customers, the OIB worker authorizes a maximum of three hours for the initial assessment to be completed.

The O&M specialist must include in the initial assessment observations of and recommendations on white cane skills. The recommended number of hours allowed for training must include the customer's travel needs, regardless of the mobility tool (dog or white cane). Training with a guide dog must not exceed more than four hours and must be preapproved in writing by the VR counselor or OIB worker.

Recommendations for training must be:

* documented under the summary section of [VR2894, Orientation and Mobility Assessment](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html); and
* submitted to the VR counselor or OIB worker.

Following the assessment, it is recommended that the O&M specialist reviews the results with the customer and answers any questions that the customer might have about the recommended training.

Any request to change a Service Definition, Process and Procedure, or Outcomes Required for Payment must be documented and approved by the VR director, using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) for Blind and Visually Impaired Services form, before the change is implemented. The approved VR3472, must be maintained in the provider’s customer case file. For more information, refer to [VR-SFP 3.6.4.2 Evaluation of Service Delivery](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03%22%20%5Cl%20%22s3-6-4).

For information on acceptable signatures, refer to [VR-SFP 3.11.1 Documentation and Signatures](https://twc.texas.gov/standards-manual/vr-sfp-chapter-03%22%20%5Cl%20%22s3-11-1).

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## 5.4 Orientation and Mobility Training

### 5.4.1 Orientation and Mobility Training Service Description

O&M training prepares an individual who is blind or visually impaired to travel independently with competence and confidence.

Based on the results of the evaluation, the VR counselor or OIB worker determines the training goal and hours to be funded by VR or OIB. No training is provided before a service authorization is issued. Training is provided in person and cannot be conducted remotely.

All O&M training services for VR customers are conducted using:

* nonvisual (blindfold) techniques; and
* a rigid (non-folding) white cane with a metal tip.

All O&M training services for OIB customers are conducted using:

* either nonvisual (blindfold) or visual training, whichever better addresses the customer's needs and circumstances; and
* a rigid (non-folding) white cane with a metal tip, unless a cane with more support is needed.

Any request to change a Service Definition, Process and Procedure, or Outcomes Required for Payment must be documented and approved by the VR director, using the [VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](https://twc.texas.gov/forms/index.html) for Blind and Visually Impaired Services form, before the change is implemented. The approved VR3472 must be maintained in the provider’s customer case file. The O&M specialist must discuss the benefits of nonvisual and visual training with each customer. Role modeling and peer support for nonvisual training are encouraged.

The O&M specialist cannot conduct more than six hours or fewer than two hours of O&M instruction per day. The O&M specialist cannot conduct more than six hours of training in a day, even if multiple customers are served during that day. Billing for O&M services must not exceed six hours per day. Lessons are at least two hours long unless approved by an obtained VR3472, Contracted Service Modification Request.

For Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind (ILS-OIB) customers, the OIB worker allows no more than five hours of training per month. If additional training time is needed because of unexpected circumstances, the O&M provider sends a written request to the OIB worker.

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