

6825: Vehicle Modification

Policy

Vehicle modification may be arranged or purchased to meet an IPE employment outcome.

Procedures

Following the procedures outlined below when modifying vehicles will ensure that state, federal and professional standards have been met.

At the time vehicle modifications are initially considered, the client and counselor shall review the Fit Factors Job Aid. The Job Aid describes issues which shall be considered when purchasing and modifying a vehicle, including the length of time needed for modifications, the interface between the vehicle and the client's mobility device or other specialized equipment, warranties, parking, security, insurance, and the cost of maintenance and operation. If possible, clients considering van modifications should contact other individuals who drive modified vans to discuss the problems and realities of modifying and maintaining such a vehicle.

On-going communication among all involved parties (client, counselor, evaluator, and vendor) is a key element in successful vehicle modification. In many instances, a pre-quotation conference involving the counselor, client, vendor, and evaluator is indicated. Such a conference (by telephone or in person), occurring before the authorization is written, resolves questions about the prescription and specific equipment to be used.

Clients must have a valid driver's license, if they will be the driver. A copy shall be retained for the case record. Clients who are unable to take the road test until all modifications are completed need a temporary instruction or temporary operator's permit and a plan, developed with the driver evaluator, to obtain a driver's license. A copy of the temporary license, and the final driver's license shall be retained in the case record.

Evaluation and Training

A driver evaluation and prescription, completed by a qualified driver evaluator, shall be obtained except when purchasing or arranging the transfer of existing equipment or the provision of replacement equipment which involves comparable equipment, a comparable vehicle, and no changes in the client's functional capacities. The counselor shall be certain that the evaluator is qualified at the van level, if van modifications are planned.

Individuals are considered to be qualified driver evaluators in the area of adaptive vans if they:

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- Hold a Certificate of Recognition in Automobile Modification from the Association of Driver Education for the Disabled (ADED), or
- Are a registered occupational therapist, or
- Hold a secondary teaching degree with Driver Education Certification; and
- Have access to consultation with a registered occupational therapist.

All individuals and organizations which provide driver evaluation and training are required to be licensed by the Michigan Department of State - Licensing Division 517-241-6829. In addition, the Department of Education has established requirements for teenage (under age 18) driver programs and instructors 517-373-0763.

If the driver evaluator is not a registered Occupational Therapist, a functional capacities evaluation for the client may be indicated. Similarly, such an evaluation may be indicated in determining whether there has been a change in functional capacities.

The individual's purchase of a vehicle should be deferred until after driver evaluation and initial training; the client's need for modifications will, to some extent, dictate the type of vehicle that will be purchased.

Arrangements shall be made for the client to complete both a driver evaluation and driver training before a prescription is written if the client is a new driver, will be driving a vehicle with unfamiliar modifications, or has not driven recently. The driver evaluator may determine that the training can be waived.

If additional driver training is needed after the modifications are prescribed, the training shall be arranged with an individual licensed to provide driver training and able to provide the training in the clients' modified van. Consultation with the driver evaluator will be required to make this determination.

Additional training, after modification of the vehicle, may be necessary if there is a delay between the initial training and completion of the modifications.

If the client will be a passenger, the counselor shall ensure that the person driving the client is a licensed driver and trained in the use of equipment used to modify the van.

Purchasing Modifications

A used vehicle with a warranty and/or used equipment may provide the client with a savings in the initial purchase cost and insurance costs. However, these savings shall be weighed against the longer-term costs of maintenance and replacement.

If the client receives SSDI or SSI, the cost of purchasing and modifying a vehicle may be approved in a Plan To Achieve Self-Support (PASS) or as an Impairment Related Work Expense. The client and counselor should consult with the local Social Security office. If equipment is

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purchased without a prescription, state accounting rules require multiple bids.

The vehicle title shall be in the client's name. Including the make, year, and vehicle identification number on the authorization will ensure that the correct vehicle is obtained.

The prescription shall be reviewed with the client as well as the anticipated time frame for the modifications and the client's financial obligations, responsibilities, and commitment to participate in the conformance check.

In consultation with the driver evaluator, the counselor may determine that an engineering evaluation of the vehicle modification is indicated to ensure that any systems added or structural changes made were done in a manner which is safe. The engineering evaluation can be completed concurrently with the conformance check.

The counselor shall purchase vehicle modification services only from vendors who have agreed to conform to the National Mobility Equipment Dealer's Association (NMEDA) guidelines. Additional information can be obtained at the NMEDA website at: <https://nmeda.com/>. For equipment that has been tested by the Veteran's Administration (VA), only the VA approved equipment should be used.

Reviewing the vendor's final bid or price quotation with the evaluator will help ensure consistency with the prescription.

If clients have unresolved complaints about service from a Michigan vendor after the authorization has been paid, they shall be directed to contact the Bureau of Automotive Regulation at 800-292-4204.

A conformance check shall be purchased or arranged for all van modifications before delivery to the client. This is best planned for at the time the authorization for the modifications is written, with the following message added to the authorization: "Payment is subject to successful completion of a conformance check." In scheduling the conformance check, priority should be given to scheduling a time when the client can be present. A written report or statement from the vendor regarding the conformance check should be obtained. Payment for modifications shall not be processed until the conformance check and any corrections have been completed. It may be necessary to authorize to the vendor to drive the van to the evaluator or pay the evaluator to travel to the vendor, as necessary.

Information

In Michigan, Mary Free Bed Hospital, Rehabilitation Institute of Detroit, Disabled Driver's Services (University of Michigan Hospital), A & A Driving School (Providence Hospital), and CDE Incorporated (Bay Medical Center) meet these criteria. Munson Hospital in Traverse City contracts with the Disabled Driver's Services for van evaluation, prescription, and training

services.

The following offer rebate programs when an individual requires adaptive equipment to use a new vehicle.

The Chrysler Corporation 800-255-9877 or visit the website at

http://www.chrysler.com/en/incentives/bonus_incentives

Ford Motor Company 800-952-2248 or 800-833-0312 for people with hearing disabilities,

General Motors Corporation 800-323-9935, TTY 800-833-9935, or visit the website at

<http://www.gmmobility.com>

Currently, the Veteran's Administration (VA) tests in the following categories: hand controls, van lifts, low effort steering systems, and special driving systems.

6850: Vehicle Purchase

Policy

Assistance with the purchase of a vehicle may be authorized or arranged:

- only in support of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) service of training or employment;
- only when vehicle purchase has been determined to be the least cost service that will meet the individual's rehabilitation need after thorough exploration and exhaustion of alternate transportation options, including the availability of public transportation; and
- only with the documented approval of the Site or District Manager prior to IPE completion.

Sales tax must be paid either by MRS or the customer whenever MRS funds are expended toward vehicle purchase.

Procedures

The results of researching transportation options prior to considering or requesting vehicle purchase must be comprehensively documented in a case note or IPE counseling summary. Exploration of public transportation options including commuter bus service and curb to curb service must be investigated and documented before considering other transportation alternatives.

If public transportation is not available or will not meet the individual's rehabilitation need, consideration of other options as delineated in *RSM 6775 -Transportation Services - Miscellaneous*, must be explored. Transportation possibilities may include authorization for mileage to an individual to drive their own vehicle; taxi service; bus fare, mileage authorized to another person to transport the individual, the cost of carpooling or in some instances short-term rental or leasing of a vehicle.

Assistance with the down payment of a vehicle may be adequate if the individual will have the funds to make subsequent payments.

A used vehicle in good condition is a less costly purchase than a new vehicle and will generally meet an individual's rehabilitation needs. There are instances, however, when a new vehicle must be purchased to meet the individual's need for adaptive equipment or specialized modifications not otherwise available on an existing used vehicle. A van shall be purchased only if it is the least costly vehicle which will meet the individual's functional rehabilitation and transportation needs.

Used vehicles are required to have a 90-day dealer warranty or pass an evaluation by a registered garage. The evaluation shall not be done by the dealer from whom the vehicle is

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Revised 5/2016

purchased. The Vehicle Inspection Report Form RA-4657 or its equivalent shall be used to obtain the evaluation. Individuals are expected to trade in their old vehicle or use the proceeds from its sale, if it is marketable, toward the purchase of another vehicle or other service needs in their IPE.

The vehicle title shall be in the customer's name. A copy of the vehicle registration or vehicle title shall be retained in the case record.

At the time of vehicle purchase, the counselor and customer will determine who will cover the cost of sales tax. The practice of exploring and encouraging customer financial participation toward the cost of services is consistent with *RSM 5125 - Financial Participation*. Covering the sales tax, if agreed to by the customer might be a logical contribution as it is paid at the time the title is obtained.

If the customer will be the driver, there shall be assurance the customer has a valid driver's license before purchase of a vehicle. If a customer is unable to drive, a vehicle may be purchased if there is assurance of a driver with a valid license available to transport the customer. A copy of the driver's license of the customer or the individual who will be the driver for the customer shall be retained in the case record.

To comply with state accounting requirements, three bids must be obtained when purchasing new vehicles. This requirement is waived when the Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) contribution is a flat down payment amount. When purchasing a used vehicle, the counselor shall ensure that the price is reasonable. Generally, the purchase price of a used vehicle shall not exceed by more than \$100 the "average retail price" listed in the current month's National Automobile Dealers Association's Used Car Guide ("Blue Book").

The customer is responsible for routine maintenance of vehicles after the MRS purchase and shall be advised of their responsibility. If MRS authorizes for the full purchase price of a vehicle, there must be case record documentation of the arrangements for ensuring that the vehicle is adequately protected by insurance to protect MRS' investment.

The customer and counselor shall discuss the probable impact on benefits the customer is receiving from another agency or program prior to vehicle purchase to minimize the impact of the vehicle purchase. For example, for public assistance recipients, if the equity value of the vehicle exceeds Department of Health and Human Services program limits, the customer (and the family unit) will be ineligible for benefits. The equity value is the sale price of the vehicle less the amount owed on the vehicle.

Information

Vehicle Purchase is defined as any financial assistance towards the leasing, renting, or purchasing of a vehicle including a down payment, a monthly payment or any variation of assistance towards that of a vehicle purchase.

6875: Vehicle Repair

Policy

Repairs may be authorized for a vehicle owned by the client, a vehicle owned by a family member if the client will be driving it to support a rehabilitation service or a vehicle owned by a family member who will be responsible for transporting the client in carrying out an IPE service and this is the only means of transportation available.

Procedures

A written repair estimate shall be obtained from a repair center registered with the Bureau of Automotive Regulation. A second estimate shall be obtained when estimated repairs are \$500.00 or more. A second estimate is not required if the vehicle is inoperable.

The counselor shall determine that the vehicle's condition or value justifies the cost of repairs before they are authorized. The information used to make the determination may include the following -- a statement from the mechanic or repair center which provided the estimate(s), or a vehicle inspection from a licensed mechanic or repair center or evidence that the repair costs do not exceed the average retail value of the vehicle.

Repairs shall be authorized only from licensed mechanics or repair facilities registered with the Bureau of Automotive Regulation.

In determining if, or the extent to which, recommended repairs shall be approved to ensure the safety and reliability of the vehicle, consider:

- The cost of current and anticipated repairs,
- The age, condition, and value of the vehicle,
- Other available means of transportation, and
- The length of time it will take the client to complete the IPE objective(s) for which the vehicle is required

Prior to authorizing vehicle repairs, the counselor shall verify that the client has a current driver's license, and the vehicle has valid license plates and adequate insurance coverage. It may be necessary to assist the client with these costs.

Proof of vehicle ownership shall be requested if ownership of the vehicle to be repaired is questionable.

Information

RSM 6875 - Vehicle Repair

Revised 1/1996

Vehicles in excellent or good condition may warrant repair even if their market value is low. The older the vehicle, however, the more caution is indicated before approving repairs. When IPE activities will be of long duration, it may be more economical to replace rather than repeatedly repair an older or poorly maintained vehicle. The counselor may wish to observe the general condition of a vehicle or obtain an additional estimate before authorizing repairs if in doubt about the vehicle's worthiness for repair.

Vehicle inspections are recommended for older vehicles, when repairs are expected to be costly, or when the vehicle's general condition is questionable. In these instances, a complete vehicle inspection may be appropriate. Vehicles in generally good condition or in need of only minor repair may benefit from a partial inspection to assess the immediate problem and safety related items such as brakes, steering, and the exhaust system. The National Automobile Dealers Association Used Car Guide or an equivalent publication can be used to estimate the market value of used vehicles. Financial institutions, used car dealers, and classified newspaper advertisements can be used to estimate the value of vehicles not listed in used car guides.