

# Chapter 315: Home Modifications

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Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Policy and Procedures Manual

Revision Date: 2023

**Table of Contents**

## Section I: Definitions

- A. Home Modification: Is a structural modification of a participant's residence to enable them to safely access and use their home.

## Section II: General Policy

- A. Home modification services maybe provided by VR if they are necessary for the participant to achieve an employment outcome in accordance with their individual plan for employment. The Division may furnish reasonable and necessary home modifications to enable a person to do such things as safely enter/exit his/her domicile, safely access bathroom facilities (including shower or tub) and living areas (including kitchen and bedroom), and safely prepare meals.
- B. Home modifications must be in compliance with local building codes and with the Americans with Disabilities Act's (ADA) accessibility guidelines unless the situation does not permit and the person agrees to non-compliance in writing. If the domicile is not owned by the person, written permission of the owner must be obtained prior to doing the modifications.
- C. Competitive bidding will occur as directed by VR's central office, and prudence will be exercised in determining the extent of home modifications needed to achieve the vocational goal. If a counselor determines home modifications maybe necessary they must consult their manager and Central Office. Competitive bidding is required for all home modifications and counselors must seek guidance on the procedures for bidding. . Only home modifications to safely meet the vocational rehabilitation needs of the person, without "frills", will be provided. Although the person's "master" plan may include modifications not needed to reach the vocational goal (e.g., gaining access to the attic, garden and the second bathroom upstairs), the Division's share shall include only modifications essential to the person's vocational rehabilitation. This policy must be clearly articulated to the person so no misunderstandings develop about the Division's role in the total modifications to the domicile
- D. Only space to be used by the person will be modified; for example, a kitchen should not be modified unless the person will be enabled to prepare and clean up after meals.

## Section II. Procedures

- A. After identifying the need for home modifications, the counselor must ~~may~~ communicate with their manager and regional or central office staff trained on accessibility requirements.

- ~~B. Someone trained in accessibility will do a site visit (if one has not already been done). The counselor and the consumer (as well as parent/guardian if applicable) should attend the site visit to assure that the consumer's needs are well understood.~~

**Guidance—Site visitor criteria.**

~~The person doing the site visit may be a general contractor familiar with ADA accessibility guidelines depending on the complexity of the job, local building codes, need for below frost line construction, etc.~~

**End Guidance.**

- ~~C. The site visitor will develop materials and other specifications (including a timeframe for completion of the job) to the satisfaction of the counselor to assure that all bidders (if required) will be bidding on exactly the same job and the Division can get a precise idea of the extent of cost of materials and labor.~~

- D.B. The Regional Manager, or designee, will develop and maintain a list of building contractors interested in bidding on jobs within the region. The Regional Manager, or designee, will also acquire and maintain copies of local building codes, as needed.

**Guidance — Volunteer labor.**

*If volunteer labor is to be used, the ability of the volunteer(s) must be carefully assessed by the consumer and the counselor: well-intentioned people may not possess the skills or knowledge for below-frost line construction, compliance with building codes, ADA guidelines, etc. In the long run, hiring a knowledgeable contractor may be less expensive than using volunteers as the project will more likely be constructed correctly and will not have to be rebuilt or repaired.*

*If the domicile is rented, use of volunteers is discouraged.*

**End Guidance.**

- ~~E.C. If the materials are not likely to exceed \$1,000, bidding may not be needed; the counselor should communicate with the DVR central office to discuss probable costs of material plus labor and to learn if bidding will be necessary.~~
- ~~F. If the cost of materials is likely to exceed \$1,000, communication with the DVR central office is required to discuss the whole situation (including potential labor costs) and to learn how many bids will be needed—either two or three. Proof of insurance must be made available for inspection by the contractor being awarded a job by the State of Vermont.~~
- ~~G. If DVR central office staff feel one is needed, the counselor shall arrange a meeting of potential bidders at the job site.~~

**Guidance—Bidding process.**

~~The counselor will disseminate written specifications, will emphasize the important factors (such as using pressure treated lumber, etc.), and will tell the contractors that they have one week to present their bids. The contractor with the selected bid will be notified within a week thereafter. The counselor will reiterate the specifications—materials, tasks, and expected timeframe for completion.~~

~~In addition, the counselor shall make a site visit during the construction process to see if there are unanticipated problems and that the work complies with the specifications, etc.~~

**End Guidance.**

~~H.D.~~ Upon completion of the job and prior to initiating payment of the bill, the counselor will inspect the work. The bill will not be processed until the counselor is satisfied with the job.

~~H.E.~~ If ADA accessibility guidelines are not able to be followed, the waiver form at the end of this chapter must be signed by the person or applicable other. The original of the signed form will be placed in the case record; a copy will be provided to the person seeking services.

**Section III Spending Guidelines**

~~A. The spending guideline for home modifications is \$5,000. The counselor may exceed the spending guideline with the approval of their regional manager. When considering exceptions to the spending guidelines, the VR regional manager must consider the consumer's ability to contribute to their services. The consumer contribution must be:~~

- ~~1. Reasonable,~~
- ~~2. Based on financial need, and~~
- ~~3. Not so high as to effectively deny the consumer a necessary service.~~

~~B. DVR cannot require consumers who are SSI or SSDI beneficiaries to provide funding towards their services, including post-secondary education and training. DVR also cannot require SSI or SSDI beneficiaries to obtain student loans to fund their education or training programs. However, SSI/SSDI beneficiaries in most cases will have Medicaid or Medicare health insurance coverage, which is a comparable benefit.~~

**Home Modification  
Waiver of Liability**

This is to acknowledge that I am fully aware of and understand that the modification(s) listed below will not fully meet the accessibility guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Modification:

Ramp \_\_\_\_\_

Doorway \_\_\_\_\_

Other(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Reason(s) why ADA guidelines cannot be met:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

However, I feel the modification(s) will safely meet my needs, I want the work to be done and, although the Vermont Vocational Rehabilitation Division is involved financially, I will hold the Division harmless of liability should the modification fail due to deviation from the ADA guidelines.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(must be a non-relative and cannot be a Division employee)