

**Maryland State Department of Education  
Division of Rehabilitation Services**

**Accessing Increased Rate for Providing Services to  
Individuals Who Are Visually Impaired, Blind or Deaf-Blind  
as Approved by DORS' Office for Blindness & Vision Services (OBVS)**

## **Background**

The Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), provides Pre Employment Transitioning (Pre-ETS) services for students with disabilities and vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to individuals with most significant disabilities through approved community providers to achieve competitive integrated employment.

Historically, it has been difficult to find providers who have the skills to offer quality services and supports to individuals who are visually impaired, blind or deaf-blind (OBVS-approved participants) due to the unique needs and the highly specialized training required to serve this population. DORS is making an enhanced rate available to non-blind CRPs that demonstrate proficiency with serving OBVS individuals through the completion of a required OBVS training. (**Note:** Deaf-blind fees, services and support will be determined by the direction of the OBVS Director.)

## **Requirements**

A Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) that is not specialized in serving blind individuals (aka a Non-Blind CRP) should complete OBVS-offered training and be certified by an OBVS Employment Specialist. The training includes, but is not limited to:

- Overview of assistive technology
- Overview of diseases of the eye and the resulting limitations
- Overview of blindness etiquette
- Review of services for the blind
- Employment outreach strategies

Approved Non-Blind CRPs shall complete at least one relevant training program annually and provide the completion certification to DORS. This training program could be 3rd party and not necessarily provided by DORS.

## **Blind Support Enhanced Rate Process**

DORS will provide an increased rate of 25% for all pre-employment and vocational services on a provider's fee schedule when:

- Non-Blind CRP (agency, not an individual) completes the offered OBVS training.
- OBVS employment specialist notifies the Staff Specialist for CRPs that the CRP has met the criteria for serving individuals who are blind, deaf-blind and/or vision impaired.
- An addendum is prepared by DORS and signed by the provider and DORS.
- Upon receipt of a fully signed addendum, the Fee Schedule is updated to include the enhanced rate for pre-employment and employment services.

- Individuals who are eligible for services provided under the enhanced rate will be referred from DORS' OBVS office with specific information noted on the service authorization.
- OBVS-certified CRPs are expected to recertify annually with proof of completion of at least one relevant training. The OBVS Employment Specialist will keep track of the CRPs who are certified to receive the enhanced rate. The OBVS Employment Specialist will notify the Staff Specialist for CRPs when a CRP has met the criteria for serving individuals who are blind, deaf-blind and/or vision impaired.
- In addition to recertification, a minimum level of quality business is expected annually for the enhanced fee to remain on the fee schedule.
- **Note:** Deaf-blind fees, services and support will be determined by the direction of the OBVS Director.

### **Example:**

- For Providers whose rates are \$47 per hour for Job Coaching, the enhanced rate is: \$59 per hour.
- Rates for services on the fee schedule established using a provider budgeted cost will be offered a 25% increase as long as the CRP is a Non-Blind CRP. Provider-budgeted services include: pre-employment transitional services, training services, job coaching, EDS, WAT, etc.

### **Questions**

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