

Upgrade, Maintenance and Support

Alliance Enterprises, Inc. (Alliance) provides software services to support the **Aware** application through the Upgrade, Maintenance and Support (UMS) Program. The UMS Program is an integral part of Alliance's continued relationship with vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies after **Aware** is implemented. Through UMS, the value of **Aware** extends beyond implementation and warranty, providing compliance with federal VR reporting requirements, access to technical support and maintenance, and interaction with user groups.

Agencies that participate in the UMS Program receive:

- New releases of **Aware**. Releases meet applicable federal VR reporting requirements and ensure compatibility with current versions of assistive technology and server software. With UMS, Alliance provides peace-of-mind. **Aware** helps VR agencies stay compliant with federal regulations and meets the assistive technology needs of agency staff.
- Maintenance of the **Aware** Core System. Alliance ensures **Aware** functionality conforms to User and Technical Documentation. Agencies can expect consistent behavior, as documented.
- Technical support for error resolution and assistance with installations. Agencies can quickly contact the Alliance Support team to ask questions and report issues.
- Access to **Aware** users' groups where Alliance staff and VR professionals collaborate to understand new reporting requirements and discuss improvements to **Aware**.

Reporting Compliance

Alliance partners with agencies through **Aware** users' groups, where agency and Alliance staff work together to understand federal regulations and develop solutions for new reporting requirements. **Aware** is compliant with federal VR reporting requirements mandated by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including those applicable to Older Blind (OB) and Independent Living (IL) case types. By participating in the UMS Program, agencies receive new releases of **Aware**, including those developed in response to new federal reporting requirements.

Maintenance and Support Services

Through UMS, Alliance provides Installation Support, System Administration Support and Maintenance Services for the **Aware** Core System. Agencies participating in the UMS Program have access to prompt telephone, email and online support services to assist with installing releases, identifying and reporting errors and to answer general questions about **Aware**.

Maintenance services are provided by Alliance to ensure each agency's **Aware** system operates as described in the Technical Specifications and User Documentation.

Figure 1 provides a high-level illustration of the Alliance Support process.

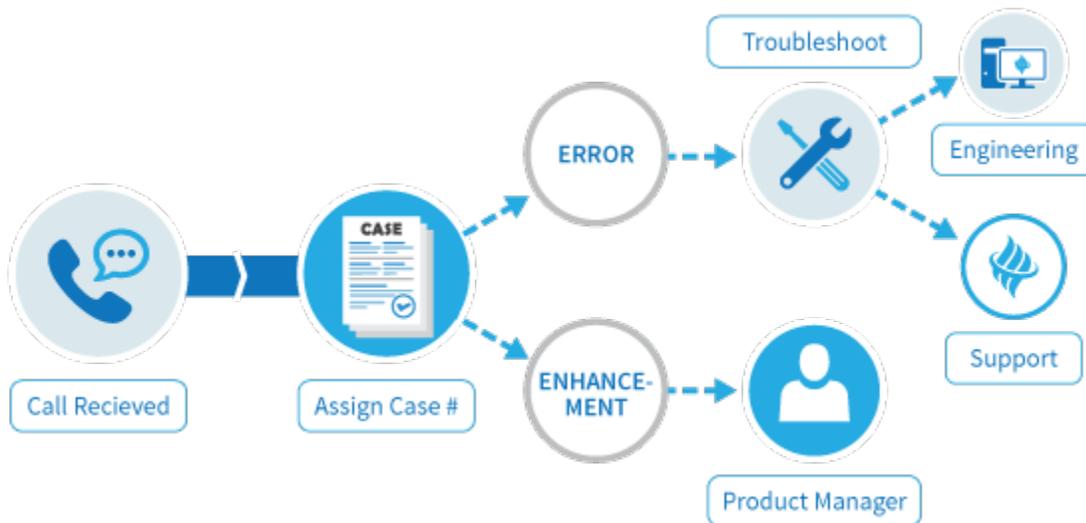


Figure 1. Alliance Support Process

New Releases

The UMS Program includes access to **Aware** releases issued during each agency's contract term. Alliance issues four different types of releases:

- **New Versions:** Substantially improved versions of the **Aware** Core System that incorporate significant new features and new functionality.
- **Upgrades:** Releases containing new features, legal and regulatory changes, error corrections and functional and performance improvements.
- **Updates:** Releases containing corrections to non-critical errors.
- **Hotfixes:** Releases issued specifically to correct a critical error.

Alliance releases upgrades twice annually to all agencies participating in the UMS Program. Updates are issued between these two releases, and hotfixes are issued as necessary to correct critical errors. Often updates and hotfixes are released to agencies individually as needed.

In addition to these releases, agencies with UMS receive any new versions of **Aware** released during their contract term. Alliance releases new **Aware** versions when there are significant changes to **Aware** functionality, underlying technology, or reporting requirements.

Alliance publishes the **Aware** release schedule so agencies can plan for the installation, testing, and training resources needed to efficiently manage **Aware** releases.

Error Resolution

Alliance employs a rigorous error response protocol that provides agencies prompt and effective resolutions to **Aware** Core System errors. Reported errors are categorized by severity and resolved in a manner appropriate for its severity level. Severity levels range from Critical to Low, with Critical severity assigned to errors that impact system functionality and prevent agency staff from performing necessary tasks, and Low severity assigned to formatting or cosmetic problems that do not affect functionality. Scheduling and resource priority is given to critical and high severity errors. Alliance Support works closely with agencies to identify, verify and resolve errors quickly. Agencies with UMS do not have to dedicate their own resources to troubleshoot and correct **Aware** Core System errors.

Third-Party Technology Updates

By participating in the UMS Program, agencies ensure their **Aware** system maintains compatibility with current versions of web browsers and server software, such as Microsoft SQL Server® and Windows Server®. Alliance also ensures that **Aware** maintains compatibility with current versions of supported third-party assistive technology, including JAWS®, Window-Eyes™, ZoomText® and Dragon® Naturally Speaking. Other third-party products supported by **Aware** include electronic signature pads, like Topaz Systems, Inc. As Alliance continues to integrate and update support for third-party technology, agencies with UMS will always be able to use **Aware** with the most recent versions of those products.

Users' Groups and *Aware* Feedback

Agencies that participate in UMS receive an invitation to join **Aware** users' groups, which include Alliance staff as well as VR professionals from other agencies. The users' groups provide agencies the opportunity to give **Aware** feedback and to discuss upcoming regulations or changes to VR business practices with Alliance developers and other agencies. Through UMS and the **Aware** users' groups, agencies become part of an active and supportive VR community. The feedback garnered from **Aware** users' groups often influences the development of future releases.

Summary

Agencies that participate in the UMS Program have access to valuable resources to support their use of **Aware**. Alliance provides UMS to relieve agencies of the maintenance and troubleshooting responsibilities that would normally accompany management of a complex application like **Aware**. Many agencies with UMS find value in the Program beyond Alliance's maintenance and support services; **Aware** users' groups provide context for significant conversations between Alliance and VR professionals regarding upcoming regulations and improvements to case management processes.

Agencies that take advantage of the UMS Program become part of a national community of **Aware** users. Through UMS, Alliance and agencies work together to ensure **Aware** continues to meet VR business needs.

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