**Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind**

**and Visually Impaired (AER) Position Paper:**

**Orientation and Mobility Specialist
Roles, Responsibilities, and Qualifications**

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This paper briefly summarizes the roles and responsibilities of orientation and mobility (O&M) specialists that are unique among the professionals who provide services to children, adults, and older persons who are blind or visually impaired. Detailed listings of knowledge and clinical competencies required come from two certifying bodies: the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) and the National Blindness Professionals Certification Board (NBPCB). In both cases, this information can be obtained on their respective websites. In addition, the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) has developed documents that outline the Scope of Practice for the orientation and mobility profession that can be found on its website.

Roles and responsibilities: The ultimate goal of O&M instruction is to facilitate the learning and development of the necessary skills in individuals who are blind or visually impaired (BVI) as well as those who are BVI with additional disabilities to move safely, efficiently, and confidently and attain the highest level of independent travel possible. To do this, O&M specialists provide infants, children, and adults who are BVI, including persons with additional disabilities, instruction in environments people use daily, including home, school, work, and community settings.

This is accomplished by interventions that develop skills, concepts, and techniques to:

* gain information about the environment and their movement through it using kinesthetic, proprioceptive, auditory, visual, tactile, haptic, vestibular, and olfactory senses;
* use vision/visual strategies efficiently including filter glasses, monoculars, binoculars or other low vision aids as appropriate to gain additional information about the environment.
* consistently detect drop-offs, and negotiate obstacles and other hazards in the path of travel through the correct use of the human guide technique, indoor and outdoor self-protective techniques, cane techniques, assistive technology, and effective use of visual, auditory, and other sensory information.
* use cognitive mapping, spatial updating, and assistive technology to establish orientation to an environment (e.g., home, school, community), plan movement through the environment to reach desired destinations, and maintain orientation while moving through environments.
* understand body concepts (e.g., parts, movement, and position), spatial and positional concepts (e.g., cardinal directions, laterality, self-to-object, and object-to-object), and environmental concepts (e.g., use of the sun to establish the direction you are facing, intersection components and traffic patterns)
* problem-solve, reorient when lost, obtain assistance, and interact with the public;
* negotiate complex indoor and outdoor environments that include streets and intersections, commercial retail settings, and public transit vehicles and facilities.
* understand relevant information provided regarding attending a dog guide organization
* understand up-to-date and unbiased information provided regarding the eligibility and/or training requirements for low vision driving in the state where the student resides.

Essential responsibilities unique to the O&M specialist include:

* assessing present and future travel needs in a variety of environments, current orientation and travel abilities, and goals with active participation and input from the learner;
* assessing environments for beneficial instructional features, travel demands, and possible risks;
* developing goals and objectives for O&M service with the learner’s stated interests incorporated;
* providing intervention and experiences for independent movement and orientation and problem-solving in daily environments at home, school, work, and in the community, including, as appropriate, use of public transportation, paratransit, and rideshare services.
* collaboration with and sharing of information with family members and others that encourage and support O&M instruction in the learner’s life.

Qualifications:

Academic knowledge and competencies required to provide orientation and mobility services fall in the following areas:

* Maintain knowledge of professional information
* Understanding relevant medical information
* Understand and apply learning theories to O&M
* Plan and conduct assessment
* Plan O&M programs
* Teach O&M related concepts
* Teach orientation strategies and skills
* Teach mobility skills, including long cane techniques and dog guide readiness
* Teach use of available senses
* Teach consumers who have disabilities in addition to the visual impairment
* Teach diverse consumer groups
* Analyze and modify environment and determine alternative travel solutions
* Know the psychosocial implications of blindness and visual impairment
* Advocate for accessibility in public rights of way and other environments

Clinical practice competencies required to provide orientation and mobility service:

The clinical O&M competencies address the skills that O&M specialists must demonstrate to develop the O&M skills and techniques.  The clinical competencies that are unique to the practice of O&M fall into the following categories:

* Communication and professional relationships
* O&M assessments
* Instructional planning
* Instruction
* Monitoring and safety
* Facilitating independence
* Professionalism

**References**

ACVREP Scope of Practice for O&M: https://www.acvrep.org/certifications/coms-scope

ACVREP O&M Body of Knowledge: https://www.acvrep.org/certifications/coms-bok

AER Scope of Practice for O&M: Scope\_of\_Practice\_Final\_Draft\_3-7-18.pdf (aerom.org)

NOMC certification: <https://www.nbpcb.org/nomc/>