What is OMSA?

The OMSA is a membership association of Orientation and Mobility Specialists (OMS) working in the United States representing all who provide O&M or guide dog services to persons who are blind and those with low vision of all ages and abilities.

OMS are individuals who have completed a professional preparation program to teach orientation and mobility to persons with a visual impairment. They may be COMS, GDMI, NOMC, or hold a state certificate in orientation and mobility, and students enrolled in GDMI programs or an O&M professional preparation program.

Its Mission is: To promote, shape, and advance the profession of O&M.
Why OMSA?

• In the 1960’s, there were Orientation and Mobility Specialists who believed that there should be an independent association of Orientation and Mobility Specialist.

• The Orientation and Mobility Specialists in California (in the 1960), established its own independent California Association of Orientation and Mobility Specialists (CAOMS).

• Illinois also established its independent Illinois Association of Orientation and Mobility Specialists.

• The AEVH and AAWB interest groups were formed to promote the discipline of orientation and mobility and were open to members of the respective organizations. To join these interest groups you did not have to be an Orientation and Mobility Specialists.

One of the characteristics of a profession is: “The development of associations of members of the profession who come together to share information and to act collectively to advance the profession’s goals.”
“It is not the intention in any way that the Orientation and Mobility Specialist Association (OMSA) replace AER. AER serves a vital and valuable role in our larger profession of people that work with individuals with visual impairments.”
The Beginnings:

- OMSA organizing committee (Edward Bell, Eileen Bischof, Mickey Damelio, Lukas Franck, Susan Langendonk and Eileen Siffermann) began its work in July 2018 to build the framework of OMSA. Members included representatives who are COMS, GDMI and NOMC.
- Chose a name.
- Wrote Bylaws.
- Incorporated in Arizona.
- Set up a bank account.
- Built a website.
- Called for members.
Appointment of Board of Directors and Officers for 2019

President: Eileen Siffermann, COMS
Vice President: Edward Bell, NOMC
Secretary: Nicholas Casias, COMS
Treasurer: Susan Langendonk, COMS
Members:
GDMI: Lukas Frank, COMS, GDMI
GDMI: William (Will) Henry, COMS, GDMI
Higher Education: Eileen Bischof, COMS
COMS: Mickey Damelio, COMS
NOMC: Jennifer Kennedy, NOMC
Student: Hailey McManus student at FSU in O&M
Major Activities

Facilitate continuing education professional development opportunities in cooperation with other entities.

Advocate for the profession of O&M by:

- Advancing the qualifications of individuals who provide O&M services and serve as mentors to novice individuals entering the profession.
- Encouraging professional certification as a standard of professionalism.
- Supporting the development of professional standards for the provision of O&M services at state and federal levels.
- Supporting best practice in the provision of O&M services.

Collaborate with higher education O&M programs for recruitment, internship/student teaching placements, and continuous improvement in service delivery.

Provide and disseminate recommended guidelines and information regarding professional and personal liability insurance for providers of O&M services.

Serve as a clearinghouse for materials and information related to best practices for providing O&M services.

Encourage presentations and publications of professional O&M studies and best practice activities that are in alignment with professional ethical behavior and professional certification standards.
Committees/ Working Groups

Committees:
- Finance Committee established in Bylaws
- Advisory Committee established in Bylaws

Working Groups:
- Website development and design
- Tax exempt status
- Association Activities
- Policy and Procedures
How to become a member of OMSA

Website:  www.usomsa.org

Facebook group

Questions & Answers????