Special Education Administrators are Busy People…

Resources and information for your orientation and mobility questions
Orientation and Mobility Issues

O&M specialists and administrators working together to meet challenges
Orientation and Mobility…

- “[S]ervices provided to blind or visually impaired children by qualified personnel to enable those students to attain systematic orientation to and safe movement within their environments in school, home, and community;”

Sec. 300.34(c)(7)(i) of IDEA
O&M Summarized from IDEA

Includes teaching students the following:

• Use of **existing vision**
• Develop & use **spatial and environmental concepts** to establish, maintain, or regain orientation and line of travel;
• Use of the **long cane (or other travel devices, including wheelchairs)** for safe travel
• Use of **distance low vision devices**; and
• Other **concepts, techniques, and tools**.

Sec. 300.34(c)(7)
O&M Evaluation in IDEA 2004

• According to state rule and federal regulations it is the responsibility of the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee to make decisions regarding evaluation (including orientation and mobility), eligibility and services for a student with a suspected or known disability. [(CFR 300.304 - 300.306; TAC 89.1040), TEA, June 2008]
Let’s Do the Numbers…

34CFR, Part 300, that is

1. Sec. 300.34(c)(7)(i)
2. Sec. 300.34(c)(7)(ii)
3. Sec. 300.302
4. Sec. 300.304(a)
5. Sec. 300.304(b) (1)(2)
6. Sec. 300.304(b)(3)
7. Sec. 300.304(c)(1)(iii)
8. Sec. 300.304(c)(1)(iv)
9. Sec. 300.304(c)(3)
10. Sec. 300.304(c)(4)
11. Sec. 300.304(c)(6)
12. Sec. 300.304(c)(7)

1. Definition
2. Instructional content
3. Screening is not an evaluation
4. Must notify parents of any evaluation
5. Assess using multiple and relevant functional and developmental abilities
6. Use of valid, technically sound instruments
7. Assessment materials technical sound
8. Assessment by trained, qualified personnel
9. Assesses skills and abilities, not sensory impairment
10. Assesses all areas of suspected disabilities
11. Assessment identifies all educational and related service needs
12. Tools and strategies are relevant
Qualified Assessors

Only certified O&M specialists are qualified to perform O&M evaluations

- ACVREP-certified O&M specialists (COMS)
- Interns practicing under an ACVREP-certified O&M specialists

There is no emergency, partial, probationary, or provisional certification in O&M.

The VI teacher can complete a screening, not an O&M evaluation.
Who Needs O&M?

Students with visual impairments are at-risk for needing O&M regardless of their:

- Age, including birth-3
- Degree of low vision
- Physical ability
- Additional disabilities
- Familiarity with school and/or home
Status of O&M Services

With only 50% receiving evaluations it is difficult to know the true need in Texas.
O&M Is Needed When Students Experience Changes in …

- Vision
- Visual demand
  - Lighting conditions change
    - such as a darkened lecture room, hall, or auditorium; or
    - outdoors, such as dusk or night
  - Visually complex environments
    - lots of details in maps or graphics
    - environment is cluttered
Other Changes

- Functional environments/transitions
  - New building(s)
    - New buildings on same campus
    - Moving from elementary to middle school, etc.
  - Community-based work or school settings
Services May Be Intermittent

Not all students need O&M at all times

• Students need O&M when:
  • They have trouble in new environments
  • They have trouble on dark days, in bright light or bright days, or when the sun is setting
  • Their travel needs change:
    • New school
    • New environment within school
  • They have changes in other sensory systems:
    • Hearing impairment
    • Motor issues
How O&M Specialists Interact to Support Student Progress

- Parents
- Classroom Staff
- OT
- PT
- TVI
- Peers
- Adapted P.E.
- O&M Specialist
O&M Specialists Work:

- In isolation with students
- In home, school, and community environments
- Non-traditional hours
- Travel between students
- With limited supervision

Administrators need to know about O&M services.
Limit Your Liability

Students who receive O&M:

• Learn safe stair techniques, thereby **limiting the school’s liability**.

• Are able to play on the playground with less chance for injury, thereby **limiting the school’s liability**.

• Are able to travel with greater independence to and from the bus stop, thereby **limiting the school’s liability**.
Efficient Use of Staff

Students who receive O&M are more likely to …

• Transition between classes without assistance

• Navigate the cafeteria without assistance

• Participate in community-based instruction, field trips, and/or vocational placements with less staff involvement

• Ride the regular school bus
O&M Assists in Transition

Students who receive O&M are more likely to…

• Be prepared for post-secondary education
• Be employable upon graduation
• Live at a higher level of independence
• Have skills necessary to access to transportation options

O&M services support meeting
SPP indicators 13 & 14
Students who receive O&M...

- Have concrete, authentic experiences in natural settings, developing a language base for literacy.
- O&M instruction prepares students for statewide assessments, supporting:
  - Map skills
  - Math skills
  - Social skills
  - Problem solving
  - Time and money concepts
  - Science and social studies
O&M Specialists are Grown in Texas

- Two training programs in Texas
- Tuition stipends available
- About 2 years for completion (less for existing TVIs)
- Post-certification support:
  - ESCs
  - VI mentor program
  - TSBVI Outreach
Recruitment Timelines

1. Awareness:
   - Time: 2-5 years
   - Activities: basic informational, exposure

2. Consideration:
   - Time: 2-5 years
   - Activities: Additional information sought/received. Exposure to visual impairments

3. Action:
   - Time: Up to 18 months
   - Activities: actively explores options; applies to program

4. Training:
   - Time: 12 – 24 months (possibly more for O&M internship)
   - Activities: attends program, may work as VI professional

Mature VI Professional
   - Time: Typically 3 years after training
Summary

• O&M Evaluations are a **legal obligation**
• O&M services **address safety and liability**
• O&M promotes **skills necessary for transition**
• Recruiting and training **resources are available**

And finally

• **Knowledgeable administrators are better able to recruit & supervise O&M specialists**
For More Information Contact:

- Your ESC

- Stephen F. Austin State University
  - [http://faculty.sfasu.edu/mercerdixie/program_page/home.htm](http://faculty.sfasu.edu/mercerdixie/program_page/home.htm)

- Texas Tech University:

- Outreach Program at TSBVI
  - [http://www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach](http://www.tsbvi.edu/Outreach)