Using TAPS as a Guide for Writing Orientation and Mobility Evaluations

O&M Study Group on TAPS

February 20, 2014

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Developed for
Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired
Outreach Programs
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Where do I find the evaluation information?
- The O&M Evaluation Report Template and Sample Reports section is found in Part 3: Appendices of TAPS 3rd Edition.
- The specific Appendix section is Appendix S and can be found on page 277

Questions, Questions, and More Questions…
- Why am I even writing this if I already know the student?
- How long should it be?
- How detailed should it be?
- Where do I begin?

One question answers all the other questions
What type of report you would want to read if you were receiving a new student you had never met and were expected to begin working with immediately?

Guidelines to Consider
- Write a report that goes beyond an annual summary; this is a Full and Individual Evaluation/FIE.
- Write a report that prepares a receiving school and instructor to know your student (even if you do not expect them to be moving).

Know your Audience
- Who is this report intended for?
- Who may read it?
- Will the student read it?
- Parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, other professionals, administrators?
More Guidelines

- Convey to parents where there child is functioning and how they can grow from here.
- Minimize jargon; at least initially, spell out the whole name rather than entering an abbreviation, e.g. Occupational Therapy (OT).

And More Guidelines…

- Add descriptions for medical terms such as eye conditions. The parents may have seen it a thousand times but the student may have a newly hired teacher next year who may need more detail.
- Write in past tense, e.g. “they were able to see the tree at 15 feet.” The functional ability may not be the same next month.

Do I have to enter everything listed in the template?

- Only include what is relevant to the student you are evaluating.
- No need to include low vision devices for non-visual traveler.

Beyond what you observe personally…

- It is important to consider information provided by others on the student’s team. There is an Interview Questions section in the Comprehensive Initial and Ongoing Evaluation Booklet that will help in soliciting information from the student, parents and care givers, as well as teachers and staff at the school.

Helping the Eye Report and Visual Information Make Sense

- In the visual diagnosis section, be sure to describe medical terms and each condition listed in the medical eye report. This includes abbreviations such as O.D. (right eye) and O.S. (left eye).
- You are helping to bridge the gap for anyone reading the report who is new to the field of visual impairment.

Resources for Explaining Visual Conditions

- Selected Anomalies and Diseases of the Eye
- www.tsbvi.edu/attachments/091_eye.doc
- Foundations of Low Vision from AFB Press
- Dictionary of Eye Terminology, Barbara Cassin, Melvin L. Rubin

Are there any examples?

- There are five different sample reports presented in Appendix S of TAPS.
- Each report has different characteristics in the presentation style. Some folks prefer a narrative style, while others prefer bulleted lists. Both styles work well; there is even the option of combining the styles in the same report.
Does a need for Orientation and Mobility exist?

- Some regions, districts, or schools may have a preference or policy for placing the statement of eligibility, which is based on the findings of the evaluation, at the beginning or the end of the document. Check with your supervisor, ARD administrator, or colleagues to determine if you have a standard to meet with your evaluations.

What about the level of service?

- The level of service recommendation can be facilitated by including a reference to the Michigan Severity Scales for Orientation and Mobility (2012 Revision) or adding the results of applying it to the student.
- This tool provides a relatively objective estimate of the level of service needed and can be reapplied by any Team receiving the student.

Questions to consider

- If the report were read at an ARD meeting without you being there, would the final report reflect the student’s functional ability?
- Do your recommendations give a direction for future lessons to advance the student’s development of orientation and mobility skills and independence in their home, school, and community?

Additional Questions

- If you were the parent of the child/student being evaluated would you feel there was a balance of positive observations and areas of challenge identified within the report?
- Does the report contain your signature and contact information or name of the school where you are based if someone needs to contact you?

Expanded Core Curriculum

- Functional Academic Skills, including communication modes
- Social Interaction Skills
- Orientation and Mobility
- Independent Living Skills
- Recreation and Leisure Skills
- Career Education
- Use of Assistive Technology
- Sensory Efficiency Skills
- Self-determination
Who should report on the ECC

- As Orientation and Mobility Specialists we have the unique opportunity to address each of these areas as we work with students.
- If the students Team does not have someone who already reports on these areas, it is appropriate for us to do so. There are times when the Orientation and Mobility Specialist is the only Related Service Provider addressing low vision and non-visual strategies.

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Thank you!
Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired

Outreach Programs

Figure 1 TSBVI logo.

“IDEAs that Work logo and OSEP disclaimer. This project is supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Special Education Programs (OSEP). Opinions expressed here the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the Department of Education.”

Figure 2 IDEAs that Work logo and OSEP disclaimer.