An Update on the Status of the Profession of Orientation and Mobility

Presented by
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Developed for 2019 SWOMA Conference
Slide 1: An Update on the Status of the Profession of Orientation and Mobility

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President of the Orientation and Mobility Specialist Association (OMSA)

SWOMA Conference November 2, 2019

10:30-11:45 a.m.

Slide 2: Session Description:

- A discussion on the characteristics of a profession and how those characteristics relate currently to the Profession of Orientation and Mobility.
- Report on the beginnings and the work of the Orientation and Mobility Specialist Association (OMSA).

Slide 3: Objectives:

- to inform the participants of the current activities moving the profession of O&M forward such as the accreditation of higher education orientation and mobility preparation programs through AER Accreditation Council.
- to motivate O&M Specialists to renew their commitment to the O&M profession by joining and supporting the OMSA.
- to encourage O&M Specialists to participate in research activities to improve on the scope of practice, body of knowledge and the code of ethics.
- to impression on the O&M Specialist their responsibilities to be and remain Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists and to set an example for others.
Slide 4:

![Figure 1 Photo of the book cover of Foundations of Orientation and Mobility - Welsh & Blasch.](http://www.archive.org/stream/foundationsofori00rich/foundationsofori00rich_djvu.txt)

Slide 5: Characteristics of a Profession

- development of associations of members of the profession who come together to share information and to act collectively to advance the profession’s goals
- requiring specialized study and preparation for the purpose of supplying skilled service
- develop around a specific body of specialized knowledge
- determine and enforce standards of professional conduct
- certify practitioners to possess certain competencies
Slide 6:

Orientation & Mobility Specialist Association

Figure 2 Logo for Orientation & Mobility Specialist Association.

“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.”

Slide 7: Why the Orientation and Mobility Specialist Association (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.

Slide 8:

Orientation & Mobility Specialist Association

Figure 3 Logo for Orientation & Mobility Specialist Association.

“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.”
Slide 9: The Beginnings:

Figure 4 Logo for Orientation & Mobility Specialist Association.

- 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.
- Choose a name.
- Wrote Bylaws.
- Incorporated in Arizona.
- Set up a bank account.
- Build a website.
- The initial call for members went out in December 2018 in Tampa, Florida at the SOMA Conference.
- The 2019 Board of Directors was appointed by the organizing committee from the membership list.
- Effective Date of November 2018, determined as a 501(c) (3).

Slide 10: What is OMSA?

Figure 5 Logo for Orientation & Mobility Specialist Association

The Orientation and Mobility Specialist Association (OMSA), a 501(c)(3) tax exempt corporation, is maintained and governed by Orientation and Mobility Specialists (OMS) working in the United States. The OMSA is a membership association 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.
Slide 11: Appointment of Board of Directors and Officers for 2019

Figure 6 Orientation & Mobility Specialist Association

- 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
Slide 12: 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.
Slide 13: Committees/ Working Groups

Committees:
- Finance Committee established in Bylaws
- Advisory Committee established in Bylaws
- Elections and Nominating Committee

Working Groups:
- Website development and design
- Tax exempt status
- Association Activities
- Policies and Procedures

Slide 14: How to become a member of OMSA

Website: www.usomsa.org

Facebook group

Slide 15:
- requiring specialized study and preparation for the purpose of supplying skilled service
Slide 16: AER ACCREDITATION COUNCIL

Purpose: To accredit organizations including specialized schools providing direct services to individuals who are blind and those with low vision; and higher education preparation programs in the disciplines that prepare teachers and practitioners working with children and adults who are blind and those with low vision. The Accreditation Council shall have complete autonomy in establishing, approving and administering standards to evaluate these entities; developing and implementing policies, regulations, and procedures for conducting accreditation reviews; making accreditation decisions; and administering an appeal process. AER Bylaws ARTICLE VIII.

Slide 17: AER Accredited Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Programs

The following higher education programs have successfully completed the accreditation process and have earned the distinction of “AER Accredited.” Each of these personnel preparation programs has demonstrated adherence to high quality standards that lead to a valuable academic experience; and the competencies needed for employment and certifications.

North Carolina Central University
Northern Illinois University
Salus University
San Francisco State University
Texas Tech University
University of Arkansas at Little Rock
University of Massachusetts at Boston
University of Northern Colorado
University of Pittsburgh
Western Michigan University

Slide 18: Want to be an AER Accreditation Program reviewer?

- AER accreditation reviewers evaluate programs against a set of quality standards. These programs can include higher education programs; or schools and agencies that provide direct services.
- If you are interested in serving as an accreditation program reviewer complete the form below and more details will follow. In the meantime if you have any questions, please send an email to accreditation@aerbvi.org.
- Reviewer Information Form https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NLLGRF6
- For Additional Information Contact:
  - Email: accreditation@aerbvi.org
  - Telephone: 571-982-4018

Slide 19:

- develop around a specific body of specialized knowledge
Slide 20: AER O&M Division

O&M Scope of Practice

A scope of practice paper was developed to more clearly define what we do as professionals. This document was shared to solicit feedback and then the final document was approved by a 97% vote from division members.

Executive Summary

Orientation and mobility (O&M) includes the concepts, skills, and techniques that individuals with visual impairments use to travel through the environment. O&M specialists are knowledgeable and skilled professionals who teach individuals with visual impairments to travel as independently as possible in familiar and unfamiliar settings. The purpose of this document is to define the scope of practice in O&M, specify settings for O&M service provision, describe O&M specialists' roles and responsibilities, promote collaboration with O&M specialists, and outline O&M specialists' education and certification requirements.

Slide 21:

What’s in a Definition? Reflections on the Scope of Orientation and Mobility

Crossref DOI link: https://doi.org/10.1177/0145482X18825183

Published: 2019-01

Slide 22:

Figure 10 The Profession of Orientation and Mobility in the 1980s by Mark M. Uslan, Everett W. Hill, and Alec F. Peck.

- Reported on the competencies identified for the O&M professional.
- Collected views about preservice O&M competencies.
- Gathered important social and demographic information about O&M specialists and the services they provide.
- Reported the unique characteristics of the population served which requires O&M professionals to possess certain competencies.

Slide 24: IMPACT of the study:

- Lead to the development of the O&M competency study.
- These competencies become the foundation for the accreditation (approval) of the higher education O&M programs, and were key in the O&M job analyses study which became the blueprint for the first O&M certification examination.
- Provided recognition of the field of orientation and mobility as a profession.

Slide 25: Current Study:

Will be a replication of the 1989 study conducted by Uslan, Hill, and Peck. Investigators and authors are Dr. William M. Penrod, Dr. Ximena Burgin, Ms. Eileen Siffermann, Dr. Bruce Blasch, and Dr. William Wiener.

- It is important to periodically review the knowledge and skills that should be mastered by higher education O&M students upon completion of their O&M preparation program. In order to achieve this aim there is a need to collect data relative to competencies from O&M practitioners, university educators, employers supervisors, and consumers.
- The purpose of this study is to determine demographic changes in the field of O&M over the past three decades; determine projected personnel needs; and determine if programmatic change is needed by personnel preparation programs.

Slide 26: Outcomes:

- Upon careful analysis of these data we will suggest “implications” for the 21st century and may subsequently ask noted experts how these implications may best be addressed in the 21st century.
- Results from the October 17-20,2019 meeting at NIU.

Slide 27:

- Determine and enforce standards of professional conduct
Slide 28: Code of Ethics

The specific performance and behavioral expectations set forth to promote the provision of quality services in manner that is respectful and responsible to all stakeholders. In accordance to industry standards, ACVREP seeks and utilizes the input of its stakeholders to develop and institute Codes of Ethics that promote professional responsibility and enhance the quality of care and service.

The recent ACVREP survey indicated that many practitioners do no regularly review the Code of Ethics and were unfamiliar with the elements of the Code. The revised O&M certification exam will include questions on the Code of Ethics.

Slide 29:

Certify practitioners to possess certain competencies

Slide 30: Update on OMS certification.

- COMS certification criteria (Scope of Practice, Code of Ethics, Body of Knowledge, Applied Clinical Competencies) to be updated in 2020. A 30 day post for public comment should be made by the end of the year.
- 2020 work will begin on the revision of the ACVREP O&M exam.
- ACVREP 20th Anniversary
  - Article in ACVREP Constituency Magazine
- ACVREP will be working on having the O&M certification program accredited with National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). This was a goal in 2000 when ACVREP was first established. Over the years the standards for accreditation have been upgraded. Accreditation is a long process that will require first updating the certification exam which is scheduled for next year.
- The ACVREP Recertification Point Calculator document has been restated and clarified.
- COMS Certification numbers: 3,105 highest number in the history of ACVREP.
The Subject Matter Expert (SME) committees are responsible for the following:

- To continuously review and recommend further development of ACVREP’s respective professional standards, and certification eligibility criteria, and recertification eligibility criteria.
- To assist ACVREP in maintaining requirements for certification that are fair, represent appropriate rigor and serve to establish the minimum level of individual professional competency required to meet the responsibilities of professional service.
- To assist ACVREP in developing items for the applicable certification exam based on ACVREP’s respective professional standards.
- To assist ACVREP in the statistical analysis of the applicable certification exam. This action serves to maintain certification exams that are rigorous and appropriately measure and assess individual professional competency relative to ACVREP’s professional standards.

SME Committee members will serve a term of three (3) years and may be reappointed for second term. No member shall serve more than two consecutive terms, but may be reappointed after a period of one year.

**Slide 32: Certification Fees EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2020**

- Recertification Application Fee for COMS, CVRT and CLVT: will increase by $30 from $345 to $375. This increase will allow ACVREP to be able to continue to invest in your certifications and continue to make improvements to the database to improve our service to you.
- Recertification of More than One Certification within 48 hours: the application fee will increase from $275 to $300. The discount on more than one recertification application will save you $75 rather than the current savings of only $70.
- Recertification Application Fee for CATIS: will increase by $10 to from $140 to $150 per 2 year recertification cycle equal to $5 per year increased cost.
- Certification Fees: Currently the Certification fees total $680. The total fees for certification will increase by 8.7% equal to a $55 increase to a cost of $735.
Slide 33: Continuing Education Opportunities

IMC 17 Conference

Gothenburg, Sweden 22–25 June 2020

https://ips.gu.se/english/cooperation/conferences/imc17

- 15 Nov 2019
  Abstract submission deadline

- 11 Feb 2020
  Abstract confirmation

- 3 Mar 2020
  Early bird registration deadline

Register your interest

Contact

imc17@ped.gu.se

Slide 34: Continuing Education Opportunities

IMC 18 Conference Poland projected for the Spring of 2022
Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired

Outreach Programs

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