

How do I become an Orientation & Mobility Specialist?

- First, you will need to determine which training program is right for you. Many universities offer training on weekends, in the summer and through distance learning options. To learn more about training programs, visit the university directory on our web site: www.aerbvi.org/universities.
- Contact each of the programs you are considering. Bachelor's, certification, and master's programs are available.
- Next, find out if financial aid is available. You may be eligible for some type of financial support through a university, your state's department of education or rehabilitation, or even your current employer.
- If you are already a professional in visual impairments, you may be able to accelerate your certification. You may only need O&M-specific courses.
- If you work in a disability-related organization, let your supervisor know of your interest. She may be willing to support your efforts and make a position available as an O&M specialist when you are qualified.
- O&M specialists receive national certification through the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals. You can find more information about certification at www.acvrep.org.

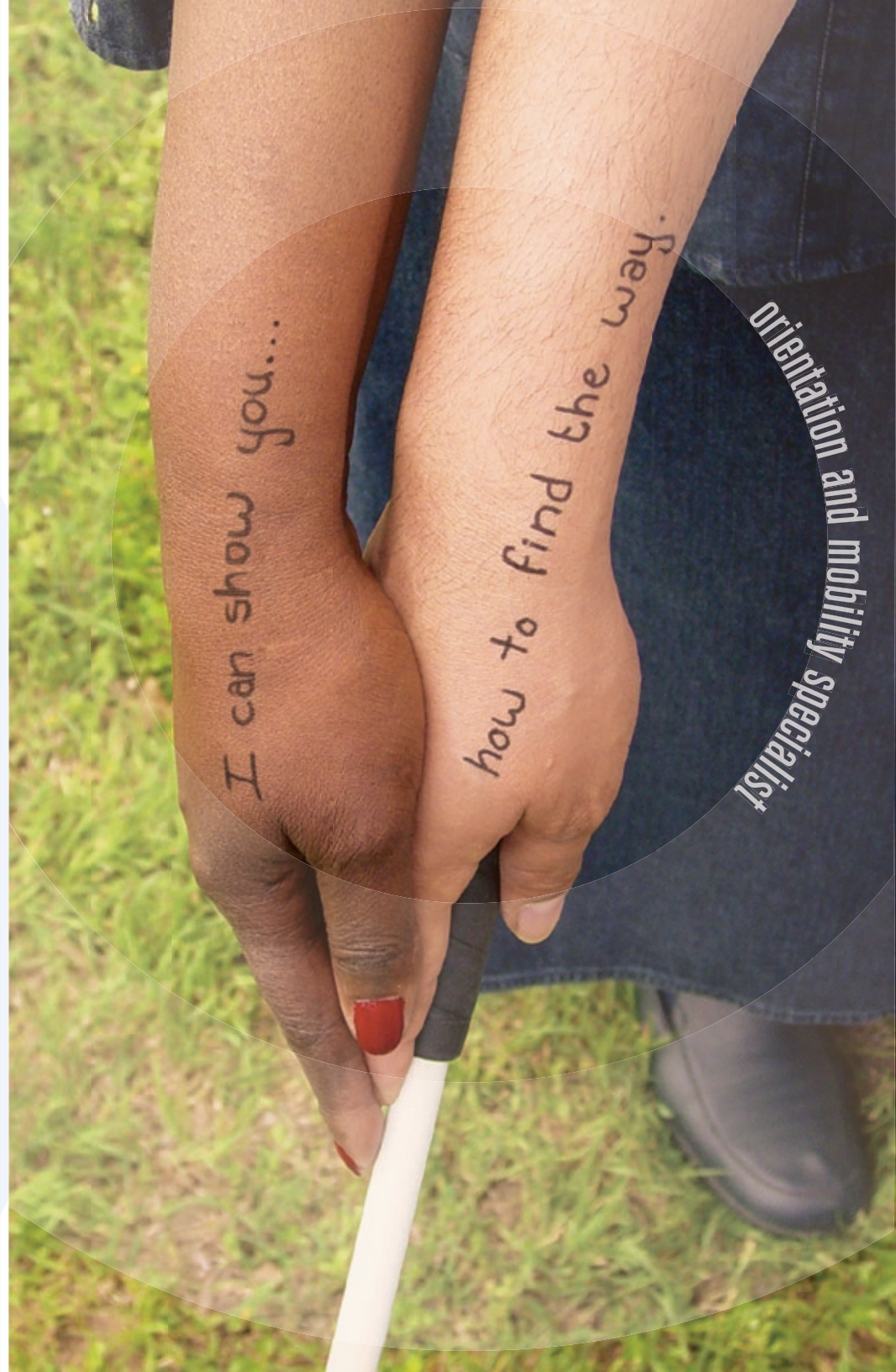
The next step:

We will help you start your career. Contact the **career desk** at the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) at 877.492.2708, ext. 203 or send an e-mail to careers@aerbvi.org.

Learn more at www.opennewlives.org. We will help you find training, locate organizations that hire orientation and mobility specialists, and introduce you to our community – people who are dedicated to showing others how to **open their lives**.



www.aerbvi.org





Teresa

After losing my sight,
I didn't think I could do anything for
myself. I was afraid to leave the house. For two
years my family took care of me. I felt guilty and hated
myself for being such a burden. Then I met my first O&M
Specialist, Heidi. I didn't believe it was possible to do what she
said I could do. After a few lessons I began to believe her.
Now, after six months of mobility training, I can travel outside
by myself. I help out around the house. I am very happy to
take an active part in my children's' lives again. I feel like
a whole person. Without the O&M training I received,
I would still be depressed, dependent on others
and thinking my life was over.

Orientation and Mobility Specialists

We are a mobile society. As an Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialist, you can play a crucial role in teaching people with visual impairments to travel independently, safely and efficiently.

O&M specialists teach their students how to answer the questions: "Where am I?", "Where am I going?" and "How am I going to get there?" O&M specialists teach people how to move about their homes, schools, communities and workplaces with safety and confidence. O&M specialists work with people of all ages and abilities.

Why should I become an Orientation & Mobility Specialist?

- You will be part of a specialized team that makes an incredible difference in the lives of others. As an O&M specialist, you are critical to a person's ability to live a full life.
- You will be highly sought after. In the United States, there is a need for over 10,000 O&M specialists. Once trained, many O&M specialists have their choice of jobs and geographic locations.
- You will have an active career, working in many environments.
- You will have flexible employment options. O&M specialists work for school districts, schools for the blind, rehabilitation agencies and hospitals. Many O&M specialists are self-employed, working as contractors for school districts or agencies.
- You may be eligible for financial assistance to help support your university training.

What would I do on the job?

As an O&M Specialist you might:

- Teach a baby how to move toward her mother's voice.
- Teach a child with low vision to use a telescope to read street signs.
- Teach a teenager to use a cane when traveling in a crowded mall.
- Teach a father how to use public transportation to go to his daughter's soccer game.
- Teach a woman who recently lost her vision to travel safely, efficiently, and independently to work.
- Teach a senior how to maneuver his wheelchair around obstacles.
- Teach third graders how to act as a sighted guide for a classmate.
- Work with community planners on developing safe street crossings, public transportation and other community resources.
- Teach the blind and the visually impaired how to move with a cane, find objects that are dropped, determine ordinal directions, ask for help, utilize landmarks, cross streets, navigate airports, and any of a thousand other tasks that increase independence.