

WHAT IS ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY?

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) is a profession specific to blindness and low vision that teaches safe, efficient, and effective travel skills to people of all ages. "Orientation" refers to the ability to know where you are and where you want to go. "Mobility" refers to the ability to move safely, efficiently, and effectively from one place to another. Orientation and mobility services are provided to blind or visually impaired students by certified orientation and mobility specialists to enable those students to attain systematic orientation to and safe movement within their environments in home, school, and community. O&M services include teaching students the following, as needed: spatial and environmental concepts and use of information received by the senses to establish, maintain or regain orientation and line of travel; use of the long cane or alternative/adaptive mobility device to supplement visual travel skills or as a tool for safely negotiating the environment for students with no available travel vision; understanding and use of remaining vision and distance low vision aids; and other concepts, techniques, and tools.

Orientation and mobility is a lifelong learning process!



WHO NEEDS ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY INSTRUCTION?

Any student with a visual impairment should be screened or assessed to determine the need for direct orientation and mobility instruction. Such screening should begin with the birth-age 3 population. Blindness is not a prerequisite. Students with low vision often require direct instruction, particularly if he or she has a progressive eye condition or whenever travel is impacted by changes in visual demands such as lighting conditions, complex environments, changes in functional environments, etc.



HOW DOES ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY INSTRUCTION BENEFIT STUDENTS?

Concrete, authentic experiences in natural settings which bring context to life

Purposeful movement teaches the brain

Safety creates confidence and a sense of well-being

Helps prepare students for statewide assessments through experiences with maps, math, social skills, problem solving, time and money concepts, and even science and social studies

Learn to transition between classes without assistance

Navigate spaces within their school

Participate in community-based instruction and field trips with less staff involvement

More likely to: be prepared for post-secondary education, be employable, live at a higher level of independence, be able to access transportation options, participate in recreational activities, etc.