

Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired

Orientation & Mobility Guidance Document 2024

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Orientation & Mobility Services

The Orientation and Mobility (O&M) program establishes and implements standards for the prompt and equitable processing of referrals of individuals who could benefit from O&M services. The standards include timelines for making good faith efforts to inform these individuals of the information that needs to be gathered to determine eligibility for services.

O&M Specialists serve all eligible individuals within their assigned territory. Individuals who need O&M service are prioritized as follows:

- A. Employment bound in Service status on a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) caseload. This includes transition age consumers who are open to VR but not in an employment status.
- B. Non-vocational - Consumer is in Service status on a Rehabilitation Teaching /Independent Living (RT/IL) caseload.

Courtesy Orientation Services

A. Definition

An individual is provided Courtesy Orientation services, whenever they meet the following four criteria:

1. The individual is not currently open to DBVI; and
2. The total time needed for the Courtesy Orientation will not require more than eight hours. The orientation should be completed within a one-month period (if individuals need orientation to the public transportation system, the time requirement is extended to no more than 16 hours within a two-month period).
3. The individual has already been trained in O&M methods and techniques by a qualified O&M specialist.
4. The Courtesy Orientation referral must be approved by and come through the Regional Manager (RM) to the Intake Worker.

Courtesy Orientation is for short term orientation only; it is not to be used as a substitute for an orientation and mobility program or as a refresher course.

The consumer does not need to complete any DBVI paperwork to receive Courtesy Orientation; i.e., they do not need to sign an application, secure an eye report, or provide any of the other documents that are normally required .

If the individual has never been served by DBVI and if during the course of providing courtesy orientation, the specialist and individual feel that a more extensive program is needed, the individual must be closed to Courtesy Orientation referred to the appropriate Vocational Rehabilitation counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher so that the individual can be referred to the mobility specialist and receive a full O&M program.

B. ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY COURTESY CONTACT

An O&M Courtesy Contact is a simple request for a very specific O&M related service or consultation and is not opening a case for services. Examples of a Courtesy Contact by O&M can include:

- Providing information about O&M to an individual who is undecided whether or not to pursue O&M training;
- Providing cane information to an individual,
- Providing information on guide dogs, guide dog schools, or related topics, to an individual;
- Marking an individual's steps with contrasting/reflective tape.

O&M Courtesy Contact applies only to an individual who is known to DBVI and is currently closed to O&M or has never been referred to O&M:

1. The individual may or may not be open to RT or VR at the time of the Courtesy Contact request;
2. Can come directly from the individual to O&M or from the RT or VRC to O&M;
3. Does not require have an open case with RT or VR;
4. Does not require the individual to complete any DBVI paperwork to receive the service;
5. The individual is requesting O&M for something very specific related to mobility;
6. The O&M services will be of very short duration, and usually involves speaking to or seeing the individual once.

A Courtesy Contact by O&M is not an O&M Courtesy Orientation Service as defined in the previous section of this Manual, nor is it a substitute for an orientation and mobility program or a refresher course. If, during the provision of this Courtesy Contact service, it is determined that actual O&M evaluation/training is necessary and appropriate, the regular policy will be followed by asking the RT or VRC to open and refer the individual for direct O&M services.

Interpreter Services

Interpreters will be provided to individuals receiving O&M Services. When an individual is already being served through the VR or RT/IL program, the cost of the interpreter will be covered through the appropriate program. The O&M specialist is responsible for securing the services of an interpreter. Some offices have a list of interpreters that they contact directly. If interpreters are not readily available, contact the Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) - [VDDHH Website](#).

O&M Initial Assessment

Individuals receiving O&M services must participate in an O&M Initial Assessment that evaluates their visual functioning, sensory functioning, motor skills, travel skills and perceived needs as appropriate. This assessment is not required for Courtesy Orientation individuals.

A. Components of the Initial O&M Assessment

Following is a list of items that could be in an O&M assessment as appropriate for the individual's situation and age.

1. VISUAL ABILITY – examples: diagnosis of visual impairment; acuity; color identification; contrast sensitivity; depth perception; field of vision; functional travel vision; visual functioning at distance, intermediate and near point; glare; identification of shapes; illumination preferred; light perception; object identification; object perception; optical aids used; reading medium(s) preferred; scanning; tracking; use of vision.
2. AUDITORY ABILITIES – examples: attention to and identification of environmental sounds, localization, tracking sound, echolocation, object perception,
3. TACTILE ABILITIES – examples: neuropathy, identifies tactile landmarks, discriminate between/among textures, discriminate between/among surfaces.
4. SPATIAL ABILITIES – examples: balance; body image; coordination; directionality; gait-posture; laterality; physical concepts; spatial relationships
5. TRAVEL SKILLS – examples: confidence/quality of movement; following directions; formal O&M techniques; indoor travel skills; organization of environment; outdoor travel skills; safety; and street crossing.

B. Report of Functional Vision Assessment

1. See the [Low Vision Manual](#) for full details

Low Vision (LV)

Individuals receiving O&M services may receive O&M related Low Vision services for O&M consumers.

It is especially important for O&M specialists to evaluate an individual's functional vision as well as his/her need for sun wear.

Subsequent to low vision examinations, O&M specialists are expected to provide follow up training with LV aids that are appropriate for orientation and mobility. O&M specialists may provide instruction with all low vision aids.

Service Notes

After an individual has been assessed, the O&M specialist must write a service note that includes:

1. Date(s) of Assessment:
2. Summary of Assessment and the results highlighting a consumer's strengths and needs.
 - a. Visual Ability
 - b. Auditory Abilities
 - c. Tactile Abilities
 - d. Spatial Abilities
 - e. Travel Skills
3. Outline of the planned O&M Program based on the results of the assessment/evaluation.
4. Additional Comments:

During delivery of services which are identified in the O&M plan, the O&M specialist must identify, in a service note, the services provided, skills being taught, successful acquisition of new skills, and difficulties encountered which may require additional work or consideration of alternate approaches.

When training has been completed, the O&M specialist will develop an O&M Closure Service Note that must include:

1. Date of Closure
2. Concerns, if any, that remain at the end of training
3. Demonstrated level of independent travel
4. Recommendations for future training
5. Reason for closure
6. Statement that the participant is aware of the closure, knows why they are being closed and knows that they can contact the agency again if needed
7. Additional comments