

Benefits of Orientation and Mobility

Movement is important to everyone. Orientation asks the questions:

“Where am I?”

“Where am I going?” and

“How do I get there?”

Mobility involves getting there safely and efficiently. Orientation and mobility (O&M) begins with understanding where your body ends and the environment begins. It also includes knowing about relationships between different objects in the environment. O&M is a related service and may be provided for all students with visual impairments from birth through age 21 years, regardless of additional disabilities.

Orientation and mobility is a lifelong learning process. It is important because:

Movement teaches the brain.

O&M teaches movement with a purpose. Purposeful movement may not occur naturally for children with a visual impairment. An early O&M evaluation is critical.

Safety creates confidence and a sense of well-being.

O&M skills enable children to safely explore and interact with the world, including the home, school, and community. When infants and children, including those with low vision or multiple disabilities, understand their environments, they feel safe. Early O&M evaluation is critical.

Experience brings context to life.

O&M instruction provides real experiences essential to all children. The skills learned reduce isolation by giving students a “common ground” for interacting with family, friends, and future employers. O&M instruction brings the general curriculum to life. Early and periodic O&M evaluations are critical.

O&M evaluations include activities such as assessing a student while:

- she moves around a different campus to evaluate her abilities in unfamiliar environments.
- he uses his limited night vision in the neighborhood or community.
- she uses her wheelchair to travel to the cafeteria, restroom, or other spot on the campus or community.

O&M instruction includes activities such as teaching:

- the parents of an infant how to deal with their fear that their baby will hurt himself as he moves around the room.
- a young child how to move towards her mother’s voice.
- a young child with limited movement that those movements creates changes in his life.
- a student how to find her way in the community by using a telescope or monocular to read street signs.
- an adolescent how to use a cane and the bus system to independently meet his friends.
- a girl in a wheelchair how to find the bathroom independently.
- a student to travel independently to a future job in the community

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