

CODE OF ETHICS FOR O&M SPECIALISTS

PREAMBLE

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialists recognize the significant role that independent movement plays in the overall growth and functioning of the individual and are dedicated to helping each individual attain the level of independence necessary to reach his or her full potential. Orientation and Mobility Specialists gather, develop, and utilize specialized knowledge in accomplishing this with all professions. The possession of specialist knowledge obligates the practitioner to protect the rights of the individuals who must avail themselves of the particular service. To assure the public of our awareness of this obligation, we commit ourselves to this Code of Ethics.

In order to fulfill this obligation, O&M Specialists pledge themselves to standards of acceptable behavior in relation to the following five commitments:

Commitment to the Student; Commitment to the Community; Commitment to the Profession; Commitment to Colleagues and Other Professionals; and Commitment to Professional Employment Practices.

It is the responsibility of each O&M Specialist to adhere to the principles in the Code and encourage colleagues to do the same.

1. Commitment to the Student

1.1 The O&M Specialist will value the worth and dignity of each individual.

1.2 It is the responsibility of the O&M Specialist to strive at all times to maintain the highest standards of instruction.

1.3 The O&M Specialist will take all reasonable precautions to insure the safety of the student from conditions which interfere with learning.

1.4 The O&M Specialist will respect the confidentiality of all information pertaining to the student. He or she will not divulge confidential information about any student to any individual not authorized by the student to receive such information unless required by law or unless withholding such information would endanger the safety of the student or the public.

1.5 Before beginning instruction with the student, the O&M Specialist will make every attempt to obtain and evaluate information about the student which is relevant to the O&M instruction.

1.6 The O&M Specialist will respect the rights of the student and/or parent/guardian to participate in decisions regarding the instructional program.

1.7 Decisions regarding continuing or discontinuing instruction will be made with the student and will be based upon evaluation of the student's needs, abilities, and skills. The decisions will be made in the student's best interest, independent of personal or agency convenience.

1.8 The O&M Specialist will provide sufficient information regarding the various types of O&M

guidance devices and will explore with the student which device will best meet specific needs.

1.9 The O&M Specialist will seek the support and involvement of the family and/or guardian in promoting the student's instructional goals and in advancing his or her continued success. This will include sharing information with the family that will facilitate the student's welfare and independence, but not communicating information that violates the principles of confidentiality.

1.10 The O&M Specialist will ask the consent of the student and/or guardian before inviting others to observe a lesson or before arranging to have the student photographed or tape-recorded.

1.11 The O&M Specialist will make all reports objective and will present only data relevant to the purposes of the evaluation and instruction. When appropriate, the O&M Specialist will share this information with the student.

1.12 The O&M Specialist will endeavor to provide individuals involved with the student sufficient knowledge, instruction, and experiences relative to O&M so as to facilitate the goals of the student.

1.13 The O&M Specialist will not dispense or supply O&M equipment unless it is in the best interest of the student.

1.14 The O&M Specialist will not allow consideration of personal comfort or convenience to interfere with the design and implementation of necessary travel lessons.

1.15 The O&M Specialist will be responsible for services to students who are referred and will provide adequate ongoing supervision when any portion of the service is assigned to interns or students teachers who are enrolled in O&M university programs, with the understanding that each individual will function under strict supervision.

2. Commitment to the Community

2.1 The student will not be refused service by the O&M Specialist because of age, sex, race, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.

2.2 The student shall not be excluded from service because of the severity of his/her disabilities unless it is clearly evident that he cannot benefit from the service. The O&M Specialist will attempt to influence decision making which establishes the rights of individuals to receive service.

2.3 The O&M Specialist will contribute to community education by defining the role of O&M in the community, by describing the nature and delivery of service, and by indicating how the community can be involved in the education and rehabilitation process.

2.4 The O&M Specialist will not engage in any public education activity that results in the exploitation of his/her students. Exaggeration, sensationalism, superficiality, and other misleading activities are to be avoided.

3. Commitment to the Profession

- 3.1 The O&M Specialist will seek full responsibility for the exercise of professional judgment related to O&M.
- 3.2 To the best of his or her ability, the O&M Specialist will accept responsibility, throughout his/her career, to master and contribute to the growing body of specialized knowledge, concepts, and skills which characterize O&M as a profession.
- 3.3 The O&M Specialist will interpret and use the writing and research of others with integrity. In writing, making presentations, or conducting research, the O&M Specialist will be familiar with and give recognition to previous work on the topic.
- 3.4 The O&M Specialist will conduct investigations in a manner that takes into consideration the welfare of the subject, and report research in a way as to lessen the possibility that the findings will be misleading.
- 3.5 The O&M Specialist will strive to improve the quality of provided service and promote conditions that attract suitable persons to careers in O&M.
- 3.6 The O&M Specialist will, whenever possible, support and participate in local, state, and national professional organizations.
- 3.7 The O&M Specialist will accept no gratuities or gifts of significance over and above the predetermined salary, fee, and/or expense for professional service.
- 3.8 The O&M Specialist will not engage in commercial activities that result in a conflict of interest between these activities and professional objectives with the student.
- 3.9 The O&M Specialist involved in development or promotion of O&M devices, books or other products, will present such products in a professional and factual way.
- 3.10 The O&M Specialist will report suspected and/or known incompetence, illegal or unethical behavior in the practice of the profession.
- 3.11 The O&M Specialist will strive to provide fair treatment to all members of the profession and support them when unjustly accused or mistreated.
- 3.12 Each member of the profession has a personal and professional responsibility for supporting the O&M code of ethics and maintaining effectiveness.

4. Commitment to Colleagues and Other Professionals

- 4.1 The O&M Specialist will engage in professional relationships on a mature level and will not become involved in personal disparagement.
- 4.2 The O&M Specialist will communicate fully and openly with colleagues in the sharing of specialized knowledge, concepts, and skills.
- 4.3 The O&M Specialist will not offer professional services to a person receiving O&M instruction from another O&M specialist, except by agreement with the other specialist or after

the other specialist has ended instruction with the student.

4.4 When transferring a student, the O&M Specialist will not commit a receiving specialist to a prescribed course of action.

4.5 The O&M Specialist will seek harmonious relations with members of other professions. This will include the discussion and free exchange of ideas regarding the overall welfare of the student and discussion with other professionals regarding the benefits to be obtained from O&M services.

4.6 The O&M Specialist will not assume responsibilities that are better provided by other professionals who are available to the student.

4.7 The O&M Specialist will seek to facilitate and enhance a team effort with other professionals. In such situations where team decisions are made, the O&M Specialist will contribute information from his or her own particular perspective and will abide by the team decision unless the team decision requires that he or she act in violation of the code of ethics.

5. Commitment to Professional Employment Practices

5.1 The O&M Specialist will apply for, accept or offer a position on the basis of professional qualification and will act with integrity in these situations.

5.2 The O&M Specialist will give prompt notification of any change of availability to the agency or school where s/he has applied.

5.3 The O&M Specialist will give prompt notification of any change of availability or nature of a position.

5.4 The O&M Specialist will respond factually when requested to write a letter of recommendation for a colleague seeking a professional position.

5.5 The O&M Specialist will provide applicants seeking information about a position with an honest description of the assignment, conditions of work, and related matters.

5.6 The O&M Specialist will abide by the terms of a contract or agreement, whether verbal or written, unless the terms have been falsely represented or substantially changed by the other party.

5.7 The O&M Specialist will not accept positions where proven principles of O&M practice are compromised or abandoned, unless the position is accepted with the intention of amending or modifying the questionable practices and providing that they do not participate in the behavior which violates the code of ethics.

5.8 The O&M Specialist will adhere to the policies and regulations of the employer except where he or she is required to violate ethical principles indicated in this code. To avoid possible conflicts, the O&M Specialist will acquaint the employer with the contents of this code.

5.9 The O&M Specialist may provide additional professional service through private contracts, as long as these services remain of the highest quality and do not interfere with the

Specialist's regular job duties.

5.10 The O&M Specialist will not accept remuneration for professional instruction from a student who is entitled to such instruction through an agency or school, unless the student, when fully informed of the services available, decided to contract privately with the Specialist.

5.11 The O&M Specialist will establish a fee for private contracting in cooperation with the contracting agency or school that is consistent with the reasonable and customary rate of that particular geographic region.

5.12 When providing additional service through private contracts, the O&M Specialist will observe the agency or school's policies and procedures concerning outside employment, including the use of facilities.

(Adopted by Interest Group #9 of the American Association of Workers for the Blind, July 1973 and by its successor, the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired.)

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