**Resolution 2024-002 : Orientation & Mobility**

Genie Henley Velasquez, CTVI/COMS, Larisa DeZayas, COMS, Molly Wuller, CTVI/O&M Specialist Candidate, and Alison Clougherty, CTVI, Byron Meador

Whereas the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) is a professional membership organization dedicated to professionals who provide services to persons with vision loss. We promote and support the professions by advocating for evidence-based practices, high-quality standards, value-added resources, and giving voice to issues of critical importance,

Whereas a Teacher of students with Visual Impairments (TVI, CTVI, TSBVI, TBVI, etc.) is defined as someone who has been hired to instruct students with a visual impairment in the Expanded Core Curriculum who meet the licensing standards of their state,

Whereas an Orientation & Mobility Specialist (OMS, COMS, O&M Specialist, etc.) is defined as certified or eligible for certification as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist through ACVREP or NOMC,

Whereas the title of Teacher of students with Visual Impairments and Orientation & Mobility Specialist cannot be used interchangeably and roles and responsibilities are defined separately,

Whereas Functional Vision and Learning Media Assessments and Orientation & Mobility evaluations for individuals with blindness or low vision ages birth to 22 are separate assessments predicating separate services,

Whereas Roles and Responsibilities and Scope of Practice are interchangeable phrases,

Whereas Role refers to the positions or titles held within an organization or entity with specific associated set of responsibilities based upon the expertise and skills needed to achieve a given objective,

Whereas Responsibility outlines the tasks, duties, and obligations that are associated with a particular role with specific needed actions and outcomes.

Now, therefore, be it resolved, by the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), on this the 20th day of June, 2024, in the state of Tennessee that:

1. The Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist (COMS) is the qualified expert in the Expanded Core Curriculum area of Orientation & Mobility.
2. States shall require certification for any professional providing orientation and mobility screenings, assessments, and instruction.
3. According to the AER position paper of 2021 titled, *Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) Position Paper: Orientation and Mobility Assessments for Students in Education and Life Skills Settings*, “Assessment to determine need for orientation and mobility instruction should be conducted by a certified and or licensed orientation and mobility specialist, either a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS), National Orientation and Mobility Certification instructor/teacher (NOMC), or a state-licensed or state-certified orientation and mobility specialist; states may have their own specific regulations in place regarding certifications currently recognized for qualified orientation and mobility specialists in the school-age system.”
4. When considering assessment, IDEA specifies what is included in the category of Orientation & Mobility in

Sec. 300.34 (c) (7)

(7) Orientation and mobility services—

(i)  Means services provided to blind or visually impaired children by qualified personnel to enable those students to attain systematic orientation to and safe movement within their environments in school, home, and community.

1. “Qualified personnel” refers to an Orientation & Mobility Specialist (OMS, COMS, O&M Specialist, etc.) who is certified or eligible for certification as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist through ACVREP or NOMC.
2. States shall reference the roles and responsibilities set forth by AER to ensure consistency across the states in high standards and evidence-based practices, to promote the retention of and provide support for qualified professionals, and to ensure the screening processes utilized is approved by a Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist.
3. AER supports the requirement for Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialists to perform an evaluation of all students at the time a comprehensive evaluation is being conducted.