

# Licensure Program for Orientation and Mobility Specialist

The Ohio State University College of Education and Human Ecology  
Department of Educational Studies  
Program Requirements – **20 semester hours**

**Orientation & Mobility (O&M)** is specialized instruction that enables people who are blind or visually impaired, and may have other disabilities, to travel from place to place, efficiently and with maximum independence. A **Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist (COMS)** is a university-trained professional responsible for helping people of all ages who are blind and visually impaired to learn a unique set of skills necessary to travel safely and independently. These skills may include understanding spatial and environmental concepts, using remaining vision and other senses, traveling indoor and outdoor routes, soliciting assistance and using mobility devices, such as the long cane.

## Course Requirements

### Summer Semester – One

ESSPED 5510	Basics of Orientation and Mobility	2 Semester Hours
-------------	------------------------------------	------------------

### Autumn Semester

ESSPED 6510	O&M Advanced Seminar – <b>Online Course</b>	3 Semester Hours
-------------	---	------------------

ESSPED 6520	O&M Techniques & Methods I	2 Semester Hours
-------------	----------------------------	------------------

ESSPED 7189	Supervised O&M Fieldwork – <i>Arranged</i>	1 Semester Hour
-------------	--	-----------------

### Spring Semester

ESSPED 6511	O&M Advanced Seminar – <b>Online Course</b>	3 Semester Hours
-------------	---	------------------

ESSPED 6521	O&M Techniques & Methods II	2 Semester Hours
-------------	-----------------------------	------------------

ESSPED 7189	Supervised O&M Fieldwork – <i>Arranged</i>	1 Semester Hour
-------------	--	-----------------

### Summer Session - Two

ESSPED 6512	O&M Special Topics Seminar – <b>Online Course</b>	2 Semester Hours
-------------	---	------------------

ESSPED 5191	O&M Internship – <i>Arranged</i>	4 Semester Hours
-------------	----------------------------------	------------------

**Total = 20 semester hours for the Program**

**Note:** For students without a degree in visual impairment, an additional course is required during AU Semester: EDUTL 5507 Visual Processes.



### **Why become a COMS?**

- You will make a tremendous impact on the lives of infants, preschoolers, school-age children and adults, as well as their families.
- A COMS helps individuals to build personal independence and self-confidence through mastery of skills.
- There is a critical COMS shortage in Ohio and nationally.
- You will be engaged in a rewarding, challenging career that utilizes your varied talents. As a COMS, you will communicate with optometrists, educational and rehabilitation staff and families.
- You may be eligible for financial assistance to pay for tuition and fees for obtaining licensure at The Ohio State University.

### **COMS responsibilities may include:**

- Helping a parent teach her/his infant to crawl and explore.
- Introducing a cane to a preschooler.
- Teaching an elementary student to use a telescope for reading street signs.
- Instructing a student with multiple disabilities to travel a route at school.
- Teaching a high school student to ride the city bus.
- Assisting an adult in learning the route to a new workplace.
- Helping an older adult to get around home after a vision loss.

### **Additional Information**

While every effort has been made to design this program so it is flexible for working professionals, some students may need to take time off (i.e. personal leave, professional leave, vacation) because of the required number of hours for licensure and the importance of quality experiences during the fieldwork facet of the O&M Program. It will be the responsibility of each student to work out the scheduling of these hours, which may require making special arrangements with his/her employer, when necessary. Face-to-face techniques classes are offered on Saturday sessions and seminar courses during the school year are presented in an on-line format using the OSU Carmen system.

Students with no background in education may be required to complete some additional assignments/projects as they complete this sequence, at the discretion of the O&M faculty.

## Course Descriptions

### Summer 8-week Session II (2 semester credits)

#### **ESSPED 5510: Basics of Orientation and Mobility – 2 semester credits**

This course presents an overview of the major historical events in the development of the field of orientation and mobility (O&M) in the United States and the primary mobility systems utilized in the field of O&M for travel purposes. Students learn the anatomy and physiology of the eye, causes of vision impairment and how these causes affect travel skills. Focus on how to access professional and consumer O&M resources and assess environments for accessibility and safety is emphasized. Roles of team members in the delivery of O&M services, assessment and instructional strategies for sensory motor skills, concepts, indoor orientation, basic O&M skills and human guide techniques in preparation for formal O&M instruction will be addressed. Practical skill instruction under a blindfold is a major component of this course.

*\* Course is taught online/hybrid*

### Fall Semester (6 semester credits)

#### **ESSPED 6510: O&M Intermediate Seminar – 3 semester credits**

This course outlines current national and local O&M certification standards, Code of Ethics and laws and regulations that impact the delivery of O&M services. Psycho-social implications of blindness and low vision are discussed. It provides students with a foundation for interpretation of eye specialists' reports, understanding the process of planning, skill assessment, goal-setting, designing and sequencing individualized O&M instructional programs for students/clients. Specific instructional strategies for concept development and map use are also covered, along with information on selecting mobility systems/devices to be used by specific clients/students and on working with dog guide users. The role of perception in O&M is explored, along with auditory skills necessary for non-visual independent travel.

*\* Course is taught online*

#### **ESSPED 6520: O&M Techniques and Methods I – 2 semester credits**

This course covers introduction to the long cane and adaptive mobility devices, long cane and adaptive device techniques and instructional strategies in indoor environments, indoor orientation skills and route travel and residential travel skills. Practical skill instruction under a blindfold is a major component of this course.

*\* Course is taught face-to-face*

#### **ESSPED 7189: Supervised O&M Field Experience I – 1 semester credit**

This fieldwork requirement includes 50 hours of observation of O&M instruction provided by a COMS within at least two different settings (private agency, school district, dog guide school, deaf-blind center, early childhood program, Developmental Disabilities program, state school for the blind, etc.). Students are required to keep a journal of their hours and experiences.

*\* Course time will be arranged – face-to-face meetings*



## Spring Semester (6 semester credits)

### **ESSPED 6511: O&M Advanced Seminar – 3 semester credits**

This course presents important background information upon which techniques instruction may be based. Information on analyzing, sequencing and monitoring street crossing lessons at various types of intersections and involving a variety of methods of traffic control are presented, along with an analysis of complex intersections, such as roundabouts, intersections without traffic control and actuated signals. Unique characteristics of small business, gas station, mall, department store, supermarket, airport, rural, urban and railroad crossing environments are delineated and public transportation options and principles for accessing them are presented. Incorporation of the use of low vision devices for O&M purposes, conducting functional vision evaluations and principles of travel vision efficiency training are discussed.

*\* Course is taught online/hybrid*

### **ESSPED 6521: O&M Techniques and Methods II – 2 semester credits**

This course focuses on skills and teaching strategies for indoor business and outdoor business travel, complex travel environments and public transportation. Practical skill instruction under a blindfold is a major component of this course.

*\* Course is taught face-to-face*

### **ESSPED 7189: Supervised O&M Field Experience II – 1 semester credit**

This fieldwork requirement includes 50 hours of supervised field experience in O&M (observation and direct co-participation in assessment, planning and implementation of instruction) within at least one setting (private agency, school district, early childhood program, Developmental Disabilities program, state school for the blind, etc.) under the direct supervision of a COMS. Students are required to keep a journal of their hours and experiences.

*\* Course time will be arranged – face-to-face meetings*

## Summer Term 4-week Session 1 (2 semester credits)

### **ESSPED 6512: O&M Special Topics Seminar – 2 semester credits**

This course highlights the diversity of the population of travelers who are visually impaired, specifically working with infant/preschool populations and older adults, and the impact of age on individuals' travel skills. It provides students with opportunities to learn about an array of adapted O&M techniques and methods that enable optimal safety and independence for a variety of clients.

*\* Course is taught online/hybrid*

## Summer Term 8-week Session II (4 semester credits)

### **ESSPED 5191: O&M Internship – 4 semester credits**

This internship requires 250 hours of direct participation in O&M assessment, planning and instruction of a variety of students within at least one setting (e.g. private agency, state school for the blind, and/or a Veterans Affairs Blind Rehabilitation Center) under the supervision of a COMS. Students are required to follow the requirements and evaluation procedures included in the internship clinical manual and keep a journal of their hours and experiences.

*\* Course time will be arranged – face-to-face meetings*



**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

COLLEGE OF  
EDUCATION AND HUMAN ECOLOGY