

Children's Orientation & Mobility Services

Vision Australia (VA) employs many Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Specialists with extensive experience in providing O&M programs and services to children, their families and other people who are engaged in the child's development.

Depending on the child's age and needs, the O&M Specialist can provide home, preschool, community and school-based programs. This can include early introduction to independent mobility skills, concept development, learning to use their first cane, encouraging meaningful exploration and guiding families along their child's orientation and mobility development path.

Vision Australia's O&M Specialists can begin working with the child and their family as early as when the child is beginning to move. Early O&M intervention is based around working with families and significant others who play a critical role in the child beginning to develop essential O&M & other life skills.

Concepts and understanding spatial relationships which are learnt incidentally by a sighted child generally require sequential and systematic learning for a child who is blind or who has low vision. O&M is a critical area of learning and it is well acknowledged that the acquisition of O&M skills has a positive effect on many aspects of a child's development.

In consultation with family, specialist teachers and other VA Children's Services staff, the O&M Specialist develops and implements programs tailored to meet each child's individual needs. Programs are specifically designed to develop skills that enhance the safety, independence and confidence of a child who is blind or who has low vision.

The O&M Specialist can also offer support to the child and their family by:

- Presenting information sessions to Education Centre staff & students i.e. preschool, primary and secondary school settings
- Conducting environmental modification assessments of Education Centre buildings and grounds. These reports outline recommendations for appropriate environmental changes/modifications relating to the child's safe mobility. This information can also provide an opportunity for the centres to make changes which benefit all children by providing safer access to the buildings & grounds
- Liaison with other professionals and advocacy on behalf of and with the child and his/her family

For enquiries regarding Vision Australia O&M services please contact the **National Manager, Orientation & Mobility** on **03 9381 6479**.

To make a referral to Vision Australia for O&M services, please contact the **National Call Centre** on **1300 84 74 66** or email info@visionaustralia.org