



International  
**Orientation & Mobility**

Online Symposium

Time: 4:00-5:00PM EST

Title: Research Supported Framework for  
Developing Paraprofessional In-Service  
Trainings in O&M

Presenter:

Dr. Nicholas Brian Casias, Ed. D,

Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, California

Description: Participants will learn about a research supported framework or template for developing paraprofessional in-service models and trainings in O&M.

Participants will be empowered with a facilitated experience and the tools necessary to develop a framework or template for paraprofessional in-service trainings within their own organizations.

# **Research Supported Framework for Developing Paraprofessional In-Service Trainings in O&M**

**Dr. Nicholas Brian Casias, Ed. D,**

**Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, California**

## **Slide 1, Outcomes of the Presentation**

- Participants will be:
  - Versed in key themes from the literature that address a need for paraprofessional in-service training development.
  - Introduced to a study that resulted in a framework or template for paraprofessional in-service training development.
  - Empowered with the tools to develop your own framework for paraprofessional in-service training.

## **Slide 2, Key Themes from the Literature**

- Role Release in O&M
- The O&M specialist can ‘role- release” many components (Hatton, McWilliam & Winton, 2003; McEwen, 2009), such as teaching others how to facilitate items that will add to later O&M instruction; develop strategies for adults to incorporate consistent terminology and routines; and monitor and provide feedback for the other adults as they provide intervention.

### **Slide 3, Key Themes from the Literature**

- O&M as Both Family and Community Educator
- The O&M specialist is responsible for designing and implementing ongoing in-service education activities in O&M for teachers, other professionals, paraprofessionals, administrators, parents, and consumers (i.e., individuals with visual impairments) (Griffin-Shirley et al., 2000).

### **Slide 4, Key Themes from the Literature**

- O&M as Both Instructor and Consultant
- As a consultant, an O&M specialist may role release some basic instructional duties (e.g., monitor route travel) to a teacher, parent, or paraprofessional who interacts with a student daily (Griffin-Shirley, Kelley, & Lawrence, 2006).

### **Slide 5, Purpose of the Study**

- Examine in detail the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals
- The purpose of this study was to examine in detail the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals who work with students with visual impairments in public schools as recommended by experts/practitioners (within the itinerant Orientation and Mobility service delivery model) to influence and develop in-service training and supervision methods.

### **Slide 6, Importance of the Study**

- Need for a more formal approach to training paraprofessionals
- Research from McKenzie and Lewis (2008) has demonstrated the strong need for a more formal approach to training paraprofessionals who work with students who are visually impaired. Although paraprofessionals should not be trained to replace teachers of students with visual impairments, they do require intense and specific training to perform their daily job function of providing instructional support.

### **Slide 7, Methodology of the Study**

- Delphi Study
- A Delphi study uses a panel of experts who respond to a survey of several rounds to create consensus on one or more issues.
- Borg and Gall (1983) have recommended use of the Delphi method "whenever consensus is needed from persons who are knowledgeable about a particular subject" (p. 43).

### **Slide 8, Population of the Study**

- 11 Orientation and Mobility Specialists
- The human participants for this study consisted of 11 Orientation and Mobility Specialists (adult educators, 18 years of age or older) that supervise paraprofessionals who work with students with visual impairments in public schools (within the itinerant orientation and mobility service delivery model) in Southern California.

### **Slide 9, Research Questions of the Study**

- What do Orientation and Mobility Specialists report are the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals who work with students who are visually impaired?

## Slide 10, Results of the Study (Roles and Responsibilities)

Responses	Weighted Score
Ensure Student Safety	20.00
Support O&M IEP Goals	55.00
Reinforce O&M Skills on Campus	60.00

## Slide 11, Roles and Responsibilities (Monitor or Reinforce)

- **Monitoring** is defined as involving **only observation** of the student by the paraprofessional and subsequent **reporting** to the O&M specialist about the student's progress.
- **Effective monitoring** of a skill by a paraprofessional requires the paraprofessional to be **knowledgeable** about the appropriate skill; however, there would be **no correction and/or redirection** should the observed skill be inappropriate.
- **Reinforcing** is defined as involving **observation** of the student by the paraprofessional, subsequent **reporting** to the O&M specialist about the student's progress, and could **include correction and/or redirection** should the observed skill be inappropriate.
- **Effective reinforcing** of a skill by a paraprofessional requires the paraprofessional to be **knowledgeable** about the appropriate skill and **possess the ability to display the skill accurately**.

## **Slide 12, Direct correction/intervention intensifies the level of involvement of support.**

### **Monitoring**

- O&M skills on campus
- Proper cane mechanics on campus

### **Report**

- Concerns to O&M
- Progress to O&M

### **Other**

- Promote independence
- Minimal interaction as possible (shadow)

### **Ensure**

- Student safety
- Route travel consistency

### **Reinforcement**

- O&M skills on campus
- Proper cane mechanics on campus
- Concept development
- Skills taught on campus
- Concepts and techniques after receiving training

### **Provide**

- Human guide
- Feedback to student
- Opportunity to practice O&M goals

## Other

- Support O&M goals
- Assist student in classroom
- Demonstrate proper human guide
- Encourage mobility cane use

### Slide 13, Research Questions of the Study

- What do Orientation and Mobility Specialists report are the training needs of these paraprofessionals?

### Slide 14, Results of the Study (Training Needs)

Responses	Weighted Score
Human Guide	43.00
Basic Cane Skills	68.00
Basic Orientation Skills	72.00



## Slide 15, Training Needs (O&M Specific or Special Education Related)

- **O&M specific** training needs are defined as any subject matter that was **unique to the field of O&M** and would subsequently require a credentialed O&M to provide the training.
- These types of training needs would serve a paraprofessional specifically within the context of providing support to a student's O&M needs.
- **Special-education-related** (non-O&M) specific training needs are defined as subject matter that are **more general and common across multiple disciplines** of special education.
- These types of training needs could be addressed by both a credentialed O&M and/or other credentialed members in the special education field.

## **Slide 16, Focus on O&M specific & special-education-related training needs increases the volume of subject matter**

### **O&M Specific**

- Human guide
- Basic cane skills
- Basic orientation skills
- Basic visual skills
- Basic visual impairments
- Blindisms
- Descriptive language
- O&M IEP goals
- White cane knowledge
- Basic route travel
- Instructor positioning
- Basic psychosocial implications of blindness and vision loss
- Occlusion experience

### **Special Education Related**

- Encouraging independence
- Levels of prompting
- Promoting problem solving
- Basic multiple disabilities
- Basic concept development
- Ways to step back
- Data collection

### Slide 17, Research Questions of the Study

- What do Orientation and Mobility Specialist report are the supervision needs of these paraprofessionals?

### Slide 18, Results of the Study (Supervision Needs)

Responses	Weighted Score
Regular and Ongoing contact and Support from O&M	20.0
Consistent Communication with O&M	61.0
Supervision and Monitoring by O&M to Ensure Student Safety on Campus	76.0

### Slide 19, Supervision Needs (By O&M or Other)

- **Supervision by O&M** is defined as the **O&M being responsible** for supervising the paraprofessional in any matters related to O&M and/or specific O&M goals of student.
- **Supervision by other** is defined as **another member of the IEP team being responsible** for supervising the paraprofessional in all IEP goals of students and areas pertaining to the paraprofessional supporting the student.

## Slide 20, Recommendations for Practitioners

- **Use the results of this study as a framework or template** for developing and modifying your own paraprofessional in-service trainings.
- **Address the intensity of the role and level of responsibility** placed on paraprofessionals (monitoring or reinforcing) in your own itinerant service model.
- **Address whether you will adopt a supervisory role or not** of paraprofessionals in your own itinerant service model.

## Slide 21 Questions?

- Thank you for letting me be of service!



# Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

## Outreach Programs



**Figure 1**  
**TSBVI logo**



This project is supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Special Education Program (OSEP). Opinions expressed here are the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the Department of Education.

**Figure 2 IDEAs that Work logo and US Dept. of Education OSEP disclaimer**