

routes, evaluating the use of a dog guide, use of transit and taxis and incorporating technology into daily travel.

More than a cane

The ability to travel independently is learned through a series of stages from infancy to adulthood. For the child with a visual impairment, questions and decisions will arise which relate to the use of travel tools such as a cane, guide dog and low vision devices.

Preschool Orientation and Mobility

Children from 3 years of age to school entry may be eligible for direct service. Contracted services are arranged through CNIB-VL Rehab. Services may include a formal O&M assessment with family involvement in developing a service plan to support learning specific skills that promote awareness and independence of travel. For information contact:

CNIB-VL Rehab
Early Intervention Vision Services
604- 431-2121 or
toll free 1-833- 320-3511

School age Orientation and Mobility

The BC Ministry of Education funds Orientation and Mobility service for students with a visual impairment. For information, contact your local school district Teacher for Students with Visual Impairment or Student Support Special Services Coordinator.



About Sunny Hill

Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children is a provincial facility offering specialized services to children with disabilities, their families and communities throughout British Columbia. Using a family-centred approach, Sunny Hill helps promote the healthy development of children and youth by supporting families and community service providers in their efforts. It is also a resource for educational services and information about disabilities. Services are delivered close to home in a child's community, or on site at Sunny Hill, located in Vancouver.

How To Contact Us

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*Promoting Better Health for Children with Disabilities
through Clinical Services, Education and Research*



What is it?

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) is the development of travel skills which support awareness of the surroundings and safe, independent movement by individuals who are blind or have a visual impairment.

Through purposeful movement a child can explore and locate objects or destinations, and this can help develop an understanding about the surrounding world.

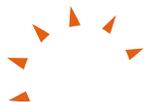
Orientation and Mobility instruction includes the training of young children who are blind or have low vision. This training is guided by the natural stages of a child's development.

Orientation

Orientation refers to the *thinking* part of travel. It involves learning about where you are, learning about the surroundings and learning how to move to a desired destination. Orientation includes the use of language, understanding cause and effect and development of concept knowledge. In addition, orientation involves an awareness of the body, developing sensory skills, motor memory and learning to use landmarks to assist travel.

Mobility

Mobility refers to the *physical* part of travel. It includes confident, safe and efficient movement from one place to another. A child's strength, balance, level of independence and awareness of dangers can affect their travel. Confidence and safe travel may be influenced by the setting, stage of skills



development, parent or child attitudes and the selective use of adaptive skills or equipment that typically are introduced through a program of O&M instruction.

We all do it! You walk or wheel into a room while avoiding obstacles (mobility), survey the room and compare what you see, hear and feel with what you know (orientation) and then begin to play or move on. That's Orientation and Mobility!

Stages of development

As children grow and develop, they experience many changes. Part of their development will include activities that are thought of as significant milestones. These activities may include rolling over, going down a slide, riding a tricycle or bicycle, crossing a street and taking a bus. For all children, particularly those with vision loss, encouragement and support are needed to accomplish the challenges of moving and travelling within their home, preschool/school and beyond into the community.

Infants

This period of time provides an ideal opportunity to guide the infant through sensory and motor experiences such as reaching, rolling and crawling. A baby learns about his or her body and the environment through sensory information (partial sight, sounds, touch, smells) and supporting purposeful movement i.e. reaching to a parent or toy. Establishing predictable routines are helpful in making sense of the world around him.

Toddlers

Toddlers need to explore and release physical energy to allow for healthy development. A visual impairment can reduce information that encourages exploration



and travel. As motor skills develop, the use of push toys and trailing skills and guiding assistance can increase a child's travel confidence and love of movement.

Preschoolers

This age group is often curious, full of questions and energy. Travel in the home and preschool settings should include learning about how things work and where to find them. The introduction of a tricycle and possibly a kiddie cane may be helpful.

School age

To support participation in school and community activities, a child needs to develop skills for progressively expanding independence of travel. Learning to safely cross residential streets can allow for visiting friends, walking to school or going to the local store. The ability to understand directions, interpret sensory information and identify landmarks is important. Participation in sports and recreational activities can support learning rules and development of spatial concepts. Effective use of a cane or low vision device may be introduced or skills further expanded at this time.

Teens

This stage in life and school often includes a need for acceptance, testing boundaries and an increasing need for independence. To fully participate in social and recreational activities, basic travel skills and options may need to be increased. This may include learning how to plan out travel

