

# Blind Services; Independent Living and Orientation and Mobility



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## Who We Are.

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, The Kentucky Office for the Blind and The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation merged to form one agency. Independent Living and Orientation and Mobility are now under the Blind Services Branch of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.





# What are Independent Living Services (IL)?

Independent Living is a short term rehabilitation program for individuals with visual impairment who are having difficulty with daily living skills. The goal is to help individuals achieve their maximum level of independence within their homes and communities.



# Who Qualifies for IL Services?

- ▶ Visual acuity of 20/60 or worse in both eyes or significant reduction in visual field.
  - ▶ Individuals up to age 54 who do not wish to work.
  - ▶ Older Individuals (OIB) aged 55 and over who are retired.
  - ▶ Individuals aged 14 and older who are receiving employment services through OVR.
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# What is the Referral Process?

- ▶ Anyone can make a referral. Self-made, doctor, friend etc.
- ▶ Contact a regional office. Must provide name, phone number and address.
- ▶ If they are an OVR consumer, the VR counselor completes the Specialized Services Referral Form and attaches copies of vision information and OVR application form.



# How do IL Services Work?

- Schedule a home visit.
  - Assessment along with visual documentation determines eligibility.
  - Individualized plan of services is determined with consumer.
  - Training and some assistive devices are provided. This can include Orientation and Mobility Training.
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# Common Eye Diseases

- ▶ Macular Degeneration
  - ▶ Diabetic Retinopathy
  - ▶ Retinitis Pigmentosa
  - ▶ Glaucoma
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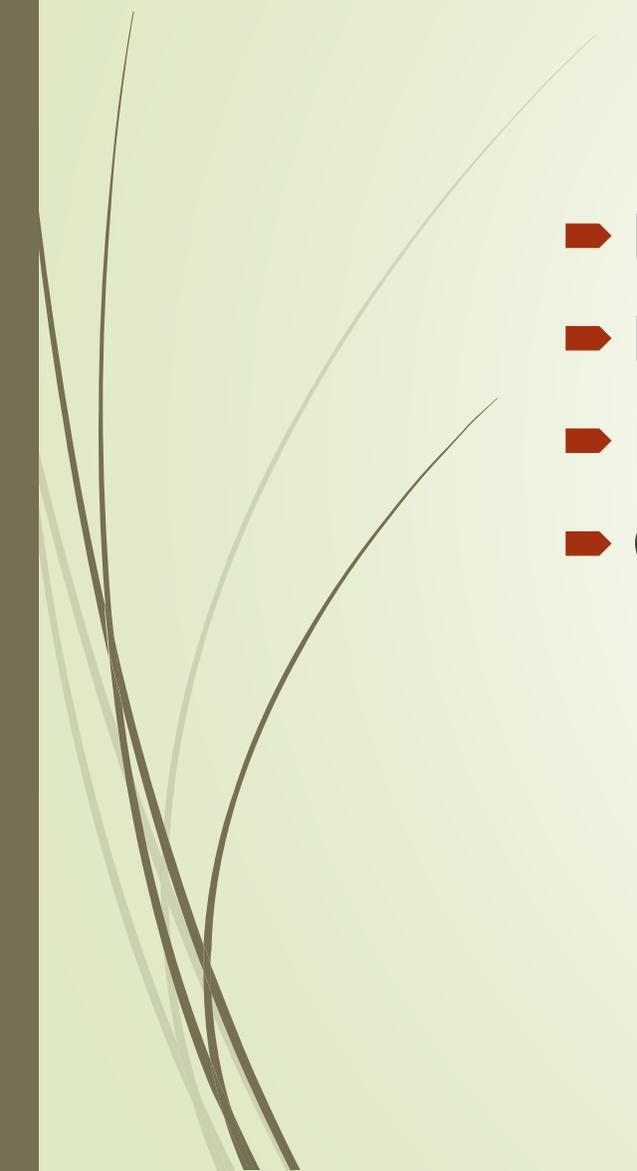
# What is Orientation and Mobility?



Orientation and Mobility training (O&M) teaches individuals with visual impairment where they are in space, where they want to go (orientation) and how to get there safely (mobility). Travel is typically taught using a long white cane, a support cane for balance or in some cases using both for added safety



# What Can a White Cane do?

- ▶ Previews the path ahead
  - ▶ Protects against obstacles
  - ▶ Helps develop awareness in others
  - ▶ Can be used with support cane or wheelchair
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# It Is Not a Stick!



Sticks are for  
roasting  
marshmallows.

(“Girl roasting marshmallows.” n.d.)



# What is Involved in O&M Training?

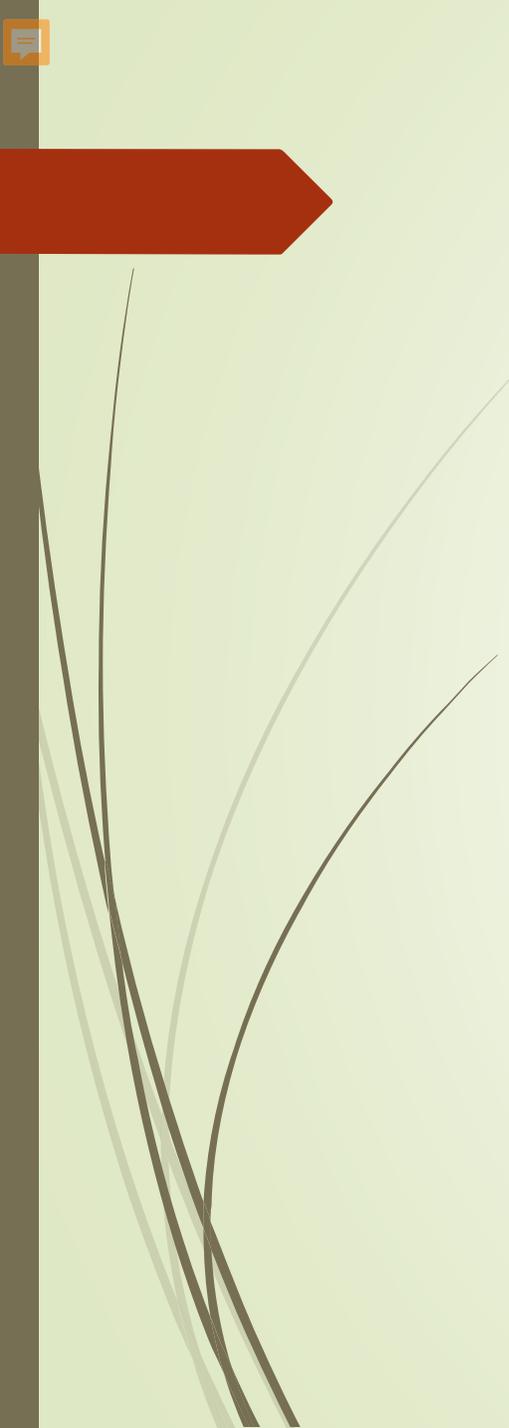
Training is done individually within a consumer's home or community, and is based on their current travel needs. O&M training takes time to master the foundational concepts then expand upon them as their confidence emerges. The estimated time frame for training can be one to six months depending on the individual goals.

- ▶ Assessment of gait, posture, environment, and other health conditions.
- ▶ Develop realistic goals with consumer



# What is Taught During O&M Training?

- ▶ Human Guide
- ▶ Cane skills
- ▶ Job site
- ▶ College campus
- ▶ Neighborhood
- ▶ Street Crossings
- ▶ Sunshield evaluation
- ▶ Use of public transportation
- ▶ Use of monocular and bioptic device
- ▶ Preparation for dog guide



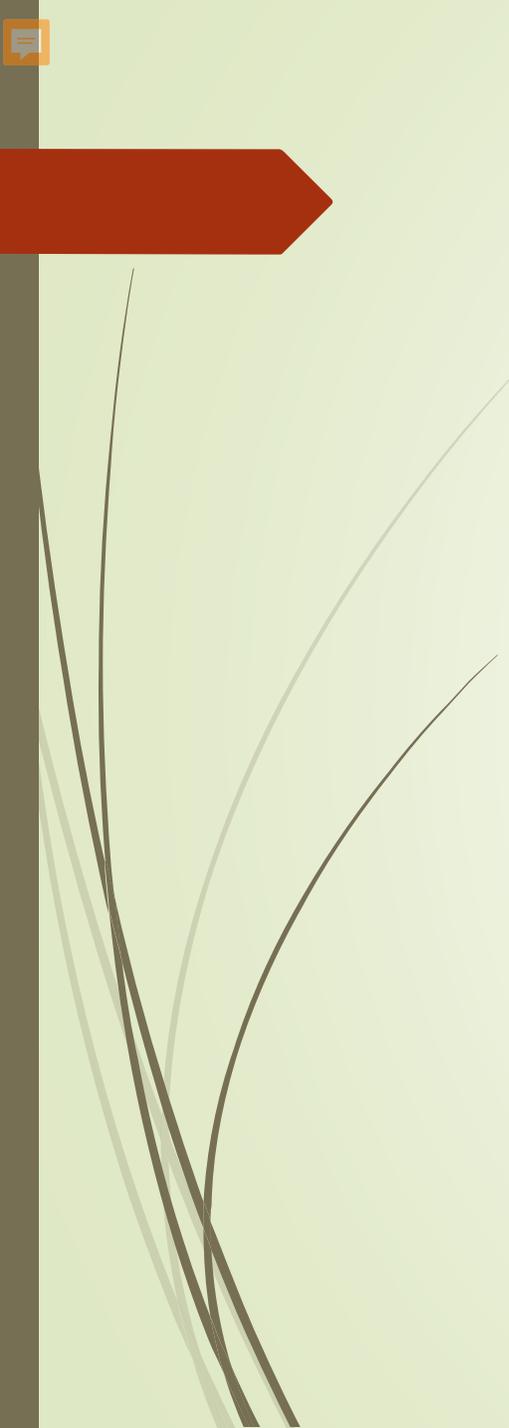
# A Word About O&M Instruction for Deaf and Blind

- Looking at more variables.
- Usually takes longer
- Not all interpreters are familiar with tactile sign or O&M vocabulary
- Modify teaching methods
- Provide as much information with referral as possible.
- Patience



# How to Make an O&M Referral?

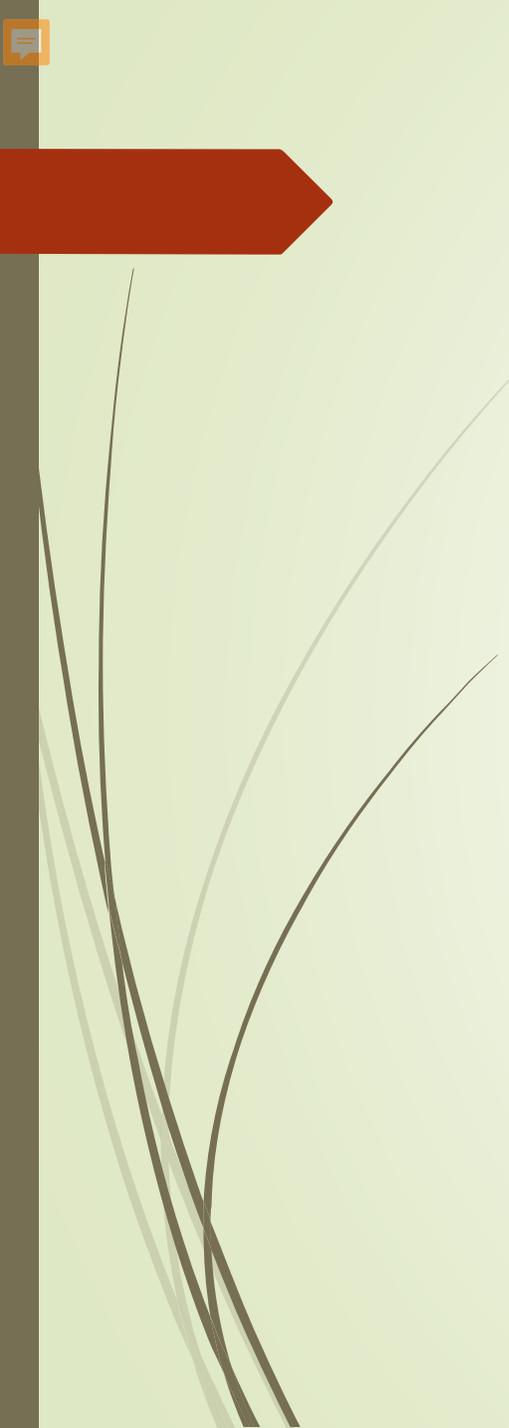
- IL or VR counselor completes Specialized Services Referral Form.
  - Vision information and pertinent health information.
  - What made you refer them?
  - What are their goals?
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# Human Guide

## The Big No-Nos!

- **Never** grab push or pull an individual.
- **Never** leave them in the middle of nowhere.
- **Never assume** they need assistance. Always ask first.
- **Never** touch their cane or give attention or treats to dog guide.
- Avoid generic terms like “over there.” Use concrete terms for directions i.e. “Door is at 12:00 or 1<sup>st</sup> door on the left”



## Human Guide

Human guide allows individuals with visual impairment to navigate safely in unfamiliar, dangerous or crowded environments.

**Act as a Team!**

### **The Guide's Role**

- Protects the follower
- Gives information about the environment
- Warns of drop offs and obstacles
- Communicates needs

### **The Follower's Role**

- Follows guides instructions
- Informs guide of type of assistance needed
- Communicates needs

# Contact!

- Guide introduces themselves
- If asked to assist, the touches the back of the follower's hand with theirs.

("Touching back of hand." n.d.)



# Grip

- ▶ They should grip your arm just above the elbow. Fingers are inside the arm and the thumb is outside.
- ▶ Relax your arm.
- ▶ Half-step behind you and aligned with shoulder
- ▶ Walk at a comfortable pace
- ▶ **COMMUNICATE!**

(“Walking sighted Guide”, 2019)





# Narrow Passage

Place your arm behind you in the small of your back. The follower steps in behind and slides their hand down to your wrist. Use this technique travel through open doors, stadium style seating and large crowds.



# Changing Sides



- You verbally indicates the need to change sides. The follower uses the free hand to trail across the back and down the elbow.
- Some may prefer to grasp each arm with both hands then move each one separately to maintain better contact.
- Use this technique to move the follower to the side where the door hinges are located or the handrail to stairs.

(Rosen, 2014)

# Doors



- Inform the follower whether the door is push/pull and which side the hinges are located.
- You open the door and the follower catches and closes the door.

(Rosen, 2014)

# Steps and Curbs

- Allow the follower to change sides to use the handrail.
- Inform the follower of the direction of the steps.
- Stop at the top of the steps and allow the follower to move beside you.
- The follower will be one step behind.
- Pause at the end to give them time to finish.

("Sighted guide on Stairs", 2019)





# Variations

- ▶ If balance is an issue, the follower may hook and hold the upper arm as if you are going to the prom.
- ▶ If the guide is much taller than the follower, they may hold the wrist or below the elbow.
- ▶ If the follower lacks fine motor skills to hold the arm, they may need to just hook their arm.
- ▶ In addition to human guide, the follower may wish to use their cane as well.
- ▶ An individual with a guide dog will need to hold your left arm.

Happy Tails To You!  
Thanks for attending.



("Guide dog." n.d)

# Citations

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