

# The Michigan Orientation & Mobility Severity Rating Scale

Michigan Department of Education

Low Incidence Outreach

January 2013





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### **STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL LAW**

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) complies with all federal laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination and with all requirements of the U.S. Department of Education.

## **Introduction**

The Orientation & Mobility Severity Rating Scale (O&MSRS) has been developed and revised to assist Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists in making recommendations for services for students who are blind or visually impaired in the state of Michigan. It should be stressed that the Severity Rating Scales are not assessment/evaluation instruments, but rather tools for assisting in determining service delivery times.

The O&MSRS consists of eight categories. Each of the Severity of Need Profile categories is structured in terms of impact on independent travel skills as it relates to the student's age-appropriate needs. When using the Scale, criteria provided within each of the categories is not all inclusive and many criteria overlap from one severity of need to the next. Additional factors may influence the selection of the severity of need by the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist.

## **Rationale**

A task force consisting of Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists throughout the state of Michigan and from the Michigan Department of Education Low Incidence Outreach (MDE-LIO) was formed to continue the process of revising the O&MSRS and to address the standardization of service delivery to students who are blind or visually impaired. Proposed revisions were presented and discussed during a working session at the 2008 Michigan Association for Education and Rehabilitation (MAER) of the Blind and Visually Impaired conference. The draft scales were also presented at the AER International Conference in July of 2008 in Chicago, where they received much support and useful comments. The need for consistency when determining the level of Orientation and Mobility (O&M) services for students who are blind and visually impaired was voiced repeatedly. The Revised O&MSRS is the result of these discussions.

## **Purpose and Development**

The purpose of this manual is to define criteria and guidelines for using the O&MSRS with students identified as blind or visually impaired. It is intended to assist the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team in the selection of an appropriate program of Orientation and Mobility training for students who are blind or visually impaired. The Scale may assist in supporting a change from one service delivery model to another.

A Revised O&MSRS may be completed for:

1. Initial assessment
2. IEP team meeting
3. End of each school year
4. Visual status changes
5. Placement changes
6. Other

Suggested steps for the Evaluation of Students with a Visual Impairment:

1. Assess the student to determine his or her O&M strengths and needs using a variety of assessment tools (see Appendix B).
2. Complete the O&MSRS to determine service delivery times.
3. Include recommendations of O&M services in the O&M report and share at the IEP team meeting.

The O&MSRS consists of the following eight categories:

- Level of Vision (Medical)
- Level of Vision (Functional)
- Use/proficiency of travel tools
- Discrepancy in travel skills between present and projected levels
- Independence in travel in current/familiar environments
- Spatial/environmental conceptual understanding
- Complexity or introduction of new environment
- Opportunities for use of skills outside of school

The Severity of Need in each of the scales is sequentially structured based upon a student's need for instruction in age-appropriate travel skills by a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist with input from the parents, other staff, and other interested individuals.

Each of the eight categories is structured in terms of impact on independent travel skills as it relates to the student's age-appropriate needs. The Severity of Need descriptors within each category purposely overlap to some degree. To aid the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist in the selection of the Severity of Need that is most characteristic of the student with a visual impairment, additional evaluations may be necessary.

### **Category Definitions for the O&MSRS**

The O&MSRS is primarily intended for use with students in general education settings and may be applicable for some students with additional mild impairments. Additionally, it was developed for use with students in grades K-12 but could apply to students in preschool settings at the discretion of the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist.

- Level of Vision (Medical): refers to the student's distance vision and/or peripheral vision as reported by an eye care specialist. If both an acuity loss and field loss are present, add the two Severity of Need scores together and enter in the sum in the Score column.
- Level of Vision (Functional): refers to the student's ability to use vision for all travel tasks (i.e., movement within the classroom, school building, and community) as reported by the Certified O&M Specialist. For students who have mastered age or developmentally-appropriate travel skills (i.e., cane

travel, echolocation), score a 0 even if the visual impairment impacts the ability to use vision for travel skills.

- Use/Proficiency of Travel Tools: refers to the student's need for use and skill level of a white cane or alternative mobility device.
- Discrepancy in Travel Skills Between Present and Projected Levels: refers to whether a discrepancy exists between the student's actual functioning in travel skills and the projected level of independence based on the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist's professional judgment.
- Independence in Travel in Current/Familiar Environments: refers to the student's ability to travel safely and proficiently in a familiar environment (e.g., school, neighborhood) based on current literature of age-appropriate travel levels and expectations.
- Spatial/Environmental Conceptual Understanding: refers to the student's conceptual understanding and how O&M progress is affected.
- Complexity or Introduction of New Environment: refers to the type of environment in which instruction is required (e.g., business district, new school, neighborhood).
- Opportunities for Use of Skills Outside of School: refers to whether the student has the opportunity to use O&M skills in the community, at home, etc. outside of O&M instructional time.

### **Contributing Factors to Service Delivery**

The professional judgment of the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist can influence the selection of a "Recommendation of Service" that has been determined by the Severity of Need Score. The selection of one or more of the Contributing Factors to Service Delivery may be used to place a student at a higher or lower level "Recommendation of Service" than indicated by the Severity of Need Score alone.

The use of the Contributing Factors to Service Delivery may be necessary when it appears that the Recommendations of Services indicated by the Severity Rating does not reflect the true needs of the student. Based upon the professional judgment of the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist, all factors which influence the modification of the Recommendation of Services should be marked with a plus (+.5) or a minus (-.5).

The following factors are to be considered:

- Posture, gait, and motor development
- Other physical or health impairments
- The nature of eye disease or condition
- Transition to a new school, neighborhood, worksite, etc.
- Recent vision loss
- New, hazardous, complex, or difficult environment
- Potential for improvement of travel skills
- Age of onset of visual impairment
- Maturity and motivation

- Team commitment for follow-up
- Travel time needed to transport student to area of instruction affecting frequency of instruction
- Instruction in low-vision aids
- Instruction in use of GPS
- Other (explain)

Remember, each of these factors may be either positive or negative and should be marked when modifying a "Recommendation of Services."

### **Recommendations of Services**

- **Service Not Indicated:** The student does not require O&M services provided by a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist.
- **One to Five Times per Year:** Contact by the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist may be with the student or other pertinent individuals, one to five times per school year.
- **Three to Four Times per Semester:** The student is seen directly by a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist three to four times per semester. Services may consist of direct instruction in short "units" of instruction clustered within several days or weeks. Consultation is with the student and other pertinent individuals.
- **One to Two Times per Month:** The student is seen directly by the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist one to two times a month for 20 to 60 minutes each. In addition, the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist may provide consultation with pertinent individuals.
- **One to Two Times per Week:** This recommendation is designed for a student with a severe visual impairment who may need to carry a cane for identification purposes or for limited use for some travel safety tasks. Also included may be a traveler with emerging orientation and mobility skills or a traveler who is non-visual and who is maintaining and applying orientation and mobility skills in various settings. The student requires direct service from the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist one to two times a week for 30 to 45 minutes each. The Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist provides regular communication to pertinent individuals regarding the student's needs.
- **Two or More Times per Week:** The student is seen by the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist two or more times a week for 30 to 60 minutes each. This recommendation is designed primarily for a traveler who is non-visual and who requires an inclusive program in all areas of instruction related to becoming a safe and independent traveler.

## **Directions for Completing the Orientation & Mobility Severity of Need Profile and Severity of Need Summary**

The Severity of Need Profile and Severity of Need Summary can be found at the end of this document.

1. Category names are listed vertically along the left hand side of the O&M Severity of Need Profile Worksheet. Refer to definitions on the preceding page as necessary.
2. Descriptors are listed horizontally for each category. The descriptors are listed sequentially in terms of severity of need, from none to profound.
3. The numbers attached to each severity of need are considered part of a continuum. The specific number under each severity of need name is the numerical rating to be given for that level. For example, under MILD, a numerical rating of 1 is possible, while under SEVERE, a numerical rating of 3 is possible.
4. For each category, mark the descriptor that best describes the student. Place the appropriate severity of need number in the right hand column (Severity of Need Score Column).
5. Total the right hand column to get a Severity of Need Score.
6. If appropriate, fill out the Contributing Factors to Service Delivery on the Severity of Need Summary by adding or subtracting 0.5 points. This number will be combined with the Severity of Need Score on the Severity of Need Profile and the result will be placed in the Final Severity of Need Score box on the Severity of Need Summary.
7. Using the Severity of Need Summary, refer to the table titled "Severity of Need Score and Frequency of Service." Locate the range which contains the Final Severity of Need Score to determine the frequency of service.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **EXAMPLES OF VISION RELATED TRAVEL TASKS**

Student is able to:

- Visually track a moving object
- Imitate gross motor movements based on visual observation
- See facial expressions and gestures
- Visually discriminate basic colors and geometric shapes
- Visually scan area and avoid large obstacles in path
- Visually locate or identify familiar rooms in school
- Visually read signage to aid with locating unfamiliar rooms, streets, businesses, etc.
- Visually distinguish shorelines and/or intersecting sidewalks
- Visually detect steps and drop-offs
- Visually detect blended curbs
- See turn signals on cars while standing at a corner
- See drivers inside cars motioning to pedestrians
- See color change on walk/don't walk signal
- See color change on traffic signal
- Read walk/don't walk signal without a distance aid
- Read name of approaching bus without a distance aid
- Visually determine desired bus stop without assistance from driver
- Visually locate doors to stores and other commercial buildings
- Read grocery store aisle signs without a distance aid
- Understand how lighting conditions affect travel skills
- Explain the status of own vision related to travel (day/night)

**APPENDIX B**  
**RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION ON ORIENTATION & MOBILITY**

- Beyond Arms Reach
- Concept Development for Visually Handicapped Children
- Early Focus
- Move with Me
- Reaching/Crawling/Walking/Let's Get Moving
- Preschool O&M Screening
- Standing on My Own Two Feet
- TAPS Curriculum
- Foundations of Orientation and Mobility
- The Oregon Project for Preschool Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired
- Where In the World Am I
- BRIGANCE® Inventory of Early Development
- Hill Performance Test of Selected Positional Concepts
- Body Image of Blind Children
- Perkins Activity and Resource Guide: A Handbook for Teachers and Parents of Students with Visual and Multiple Disabilities
- Teaching Orientation and Mobility in the Schools
- Imagining the Possibilities: A Creative Approach to Orientation and Mobility Instruction for Persons Who Are Visually Impaired
- The Art and Science of Teaching Orientation and Mobility to Persons with Visual Impairments
- Orientation and Mobility: Techniques for Independence
- Orientation and Mobility Techniques: A Guide for the Practitioner
- Independent Movement and Travel in Blind Children

## Orientation & Mobility Severity Rating Scale (O&MSRS) Revised 2013

### Severity of Need Profile

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade/Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Severity of Need		NONE 0	MILD 1	MODERATE 2	SEVERE 3	PROFOUND 4	SCORE
(1) Level of Vision (Medical)	Distance Acuity	20/70 – 20/100	20/100 – 20/200	20/200 – 20/600	20/600 – LP	Light perception to nil	
	Peripheral Field	No loss	No loss	30 degree–10 degree Field or hemianopsia	10 degree–1 degree Field		
(2) Level of Vision (Functional)		Refer to Guidelines: page 4, Level of Vision (Functional)	Visual impairment affects ability to travel in a few selected environments	Visual impairment affects ability to travel in some environments	Visual impairment affects ability to travel in most environments	Visual impairment affects ability to travel in all environments	
(3) Use/ Proficiency of Travel Tool (Cane/ Alternate Mobility Device)		Visual skills sufficient for safe, independent travel w/o travel tool <u>or</u> demonstrates mastery of cane skills	Travel tool used only for identification <u>or</u> occasional instruction in cane skills	Level of travel tool use moderately impacts safe travel in some environments	Level of travel tool use severely impacts safe travel in <u>most</u> environments	Level of travel tool use profoundly impacts safe travel in <u>all</u> environments	
(4) Discrepancy in Travel Skills Between Present and Projected Levels		No discrepancy	Discrepancy in a few selected situations	Discrepancy in some situations	Discrepancy in most situations	Discrepancy in all situations	
(5) Independence in Travel in Current/ Familiar Environments		Maintains & refines skills in all current travel environments	Needs occasional instruction in current environments to maintain travel ability	Needs some instruction to maintain current skills in current environments	Needs some instruction in new skills and regular instruction to maintain current skills	Needs extensive instruction to introduce new skills and maintain current skills in current environment	
(6) Spatial/ Environmental Conceptual Understanding		Conceptual understanding sufficient for development of travel skills	Progress in O&M is mildly inhibited by conceptual understanding	Progress in O&M is moderately inhibited by conceptual understanding	Progress in O&M is severely inhibited by conceptual understanding	Progress in O&M is profoundly inhibited by conceptual understanding	
(7) Complexity or Introduction of New Environment		Is able to learn new environment with no specialized instruction	Learns new environment after brief introduction	Needs some instruction of skills in new or future environments	Needs regular instruction in skills for new or future environments	Needs extensive instruction in new or future environments	
(8) Opportunities for Use of Skills Outside of School		Student has multiple opportunities	Student has frequent opportunities	Student has occasional opportunities	Student has sporadic opportunities	Student rarely has opportunities	
<b>Severity of Need Score</b>							

## Orientation & Mobility Severity Rating Scale (O&MSRS) Revised 2013 Severity of Need Summary

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Birthdate:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade/Program:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO SERVICE DELIVERY	
If appropriate, add (+.5) or subtract (-.5) points for each	
	Posture, gait, and motor development
	Other physical or health impairment
	Nature of eye disease or condition
	Transition to new school, neighborhood, worksite, etc.
	Recent vision loss
	New, hazardous, complex, or difficult environment
	Potential for improvement of travel skills
	Age of onset of visual impairment
	Maturity and motivation
	Attendance
	Team commitment for follow-up
	Travel time needed to transport student to area of instruction affects frequency of instruction
	Instruction in low vision aids (monocular, bioptic system)
	Instruction in use of GPS
	Other (explain)



Severity of Need Score	Frequency of Service
0 - 2	Service not indicated
3 - 4	1 – 5 times/ year
5 - 6	3 – 4 times/ semester
7 - 12	1 – 2 times/ month 20 – 60 minutes each
13 - 24	1 – 2 times/ week 30 – 45 minutes each
25 - 36	2 or more times/ week 30 - 60 minutes each



RECOMMENDATION OF SERVICES	
Final Severity of Need Score	Frequency of Service

➔	Severity of Need Score	
	Contributing Factors +/-	
	<b>Final Severity of Need Score</b>	