

Blindness and Visual Impairment Professions

Includes:

- Low vision therapist
- Orientation and mobility specialist
- Rehabilitation teacher

Low Vision Therapist



Job Description

Low vision therapists help people learn to use their vision more efficiently, both with and without optical devices. They may work with optometrists or ophthalmologists in helping persons with low vision to do near tasks like reading, writing, crafts, or using a computer, and in doing distance tasks like watching TV or reading signs. They often provide follow-up training to people in their homes, schools, or work sites. Low vision therapists may also offer recommendations for improved lighting, enhanced contrast, reduced glare, and improved organization to assist those with low vision to function more successfully in their environments.



Employment Characteristics

At least 70% of the visually impaired population is over age 65. Thus, many low vision therapists work with this age group, either in low vision clinics or in outreach settings. Others may work with school-age children in a variety of settings, such as in residential schools for the blind and visually impaired or with school districts.

According to the 2002 Salary Survey of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), the average full-time salary for low vision therapists is \$44,777.

Educational Programs

Low vision therapists must have at least a bachelor's degree and must have passed a national certification examination administered by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP). To be eligible for certification, applicants must meet the following minimum criteria:



- Possess at least a bachelor's degree in education, rehabilitation, or health care
- Sign a written statement agreeing to uphold a high ethical and professional standard
- Pass a written examination to demonstrate knowledge about low vision rehabilitation

Orientation and Mobility Specialist



Occupational Description

Orientation and mobility specialists teach people who are blind or visually impaired the skills and concepts they need to travel independently and safely at home, in the classroom, in their communities, and wherever they may want to go.

Orientation and Mobility Instruction is a sequential process in which visually impaired individuals are taught to utilize their remaining senses to determine their position within their

environment and to negotiate safe movement from one place to another. The skills involved in this teaching include but are not limited to:

- Concept development, which includes body image, spatial, temporal, positional, directional, and environmental concepts
- Motor development, including motor skills needed for balance, posture, and gait, as well as the use of adaptive devices and techniques to assist those with multiple disabilities
- Sensory development, which includes visual, auditory, vestibular, kinesthetic, tactile, olfactory, and proprioceptive senses, and the interrelationships of these systems
- Residual vision stimulation and training
- Human guide technique
- Upper and lower protective techniques
- Locating dropped objects
- Trailing
- Squaring-off
- Cane techniques
- Soliciting/declining assistance
- Following directions
- Utilizing landmarks
- Search patterns
- Compass directions
- Route planning
- Analysis and identification of intersections and traffic patterns
- Use of traffic control devices
- Techniques for crossing streets
- Techniques for travel in indoor environments, outdoor residential, small and large business districts, mall travel, and rural areas
- Problem solving
- Use of public transportation
- Evaluation with sun filters for the reduction of glare
- Instructional use of low vision devices

According to the 2002 Salary Survey of the AER, the average full-time salary for orientation and mobility specialists is \$46,564.

Rehabilitation Teacher



Job Description

Rehabilitation teachers instruct persons with vision impairment in the use of compensatory skills and assistive technology that will enable them to live safe, productive, and independent lives. Specific rehabilitation teacher responsibilities include

- Assessing and evaluating learners' needs in home, work, and community environments,
- Developing and implementing instructional programs, case management, and record keeping,
- Helping persons with visual impairment identify and use local and national resources, and
- Facilitate psychosocial adjustment to blindness and vision loss.



Employment Characteristics

Rehabilitation teachers work in organizations that enhance vocational opportunities, independent living, and educational development of persons with vision loss. This may include working in center-based or itinerant settings, including clients' homes and workplaces. Rehabilitation teachers provide individualized programs of instruction that accommodate the unique needs of specialized groups, including persons who are aging, deaf-blind, or disabled.

According to the 2002 Salary Survey of the AER, the average full-time salary for rehabilitation teachers is \$37,055.



Inquiries

Careers/Curriculum

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Certification

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Program Accreditation

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