

# Blindness and Visual Impairment Professions

## Includes:

- Low Vision Therapist
- Orientation and mobility specialist
- Teacher of the visually impaired
- Vision rehabilitation therapist (formerly Rehabilitation teacher)

## Orientation and Mobility Specialist



### Career 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



### Salary

According to the 2002 Salary Survey of the AER, the average full-time salary for orientation and mobility specialists is \$46,564. Refer to Section IV, Table 5 of this

*Directory* for more information, or see [www.ama-assn.org/go/salary](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/salary).

## Teacher of the Visually Impaired



### Career Description

Teachers of the visually impaired (or VI teachers) are specialized teachers with unique competencies to meet the diverse needs of the visually impaired.

VI teachers work within the special education system but address the unique needs of children with visual impairments. In addition to working with the children (usually in a one-to-one relationship), VI teachers work closely with other teachers, parents, and other people and organizations in the community. VI teachers are specialists at translating medical information into educational practices.

VI teachers understand basic diagnostic information about vision and visual impairments. They take information on a student's visual diagnosis and conduct a functional vision evaluation and a learning media assessment. Based on those sources of information, VI teachers develop a plan to best teach the student and work with others to address instructional needs, including basic core curriculum and student-specific needs.

Specific duties of a VI teacher might include:

- Teaching a toddler to enjoy playing with a variety of toys
- Teaching a young child how to read and write Braille
- Teaching students how to make a favorite snack
- Working with other educators and paraprofessionals to modify materials to address the impact of the visual impairment

VI teachers are certified by states through the educator certification systems. Depending on the state, VI teachers can be certified with a bachelors degree, a post-bachelors certification, and/or a masters degree. Teachers must have a degree in education or special education.

## Vision Rehabilitation Therapist



### Career Description

- Vision rehabilitation therapists (formerly 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 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
  - Facilitate psychosocial adjustment to blindness and vision loss



### Employment Characteristics

Vision rehabilitation therapists work in organizations that enhance vocational opportunities, independent

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



### Salary

According to the 2002 Salary Survey of the AER, the average full-time salary for vision rehabilitation therapists is \$37,055. Refer to Section IV, Table 5 of this

*Directory* for more information, or see [www.ama-assn.org/go/salary](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/salary).



### Inquiries

#### Careers/Curriculum

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired

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Alexandria, VA 22311-1744  
703 671-4500  
703 671-6391 Fax  
[www.aerbvi.org](http://www.aerbvi.org)

### Certification

Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals

300 N Commerce Park Loop, #200

Tucson, AZ 85745

520 887-6816

520 887-6826 Fax

E-mail: [info@acvrep.org](mailto:info@acvrep.org)

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### Program Accreditation

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