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January 21, 2005

MEMORANDUM #05-08

TO: Exceptional Student Education Directors
District Contacts for Visually Impaired Programs

FROM: Bambi J. Lockman

SUBJECT: Orientation and Mobility Instruction for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) training enables individuals who are blind or visually impaired to navigate their environments safely and independently. As part of the educational programming for a student who is blind or visually impaired, it is crucial that the instructor of this set of very specialized skills has acquired the knowledge and expertise necessary to assist students in becoming independent adults. It is critical that teachers who are responsible for teaching personal safety, street crossing, business area travel, and other skills of independence be qualified to teach these skills for the benefit and the safety of Florida's students with visual impairments.

In order to ensure that students are being served by appropriately qualified instructional personnel, beginning July 1, 2007, instructors who are hired to teach or who are currently teaching O&M to students in the school setting, as per Rule 6A-6.03014(5), Florida Administrative Code (FAC), Special Programs for Students Who Are Visually Impaired, must have the endorsement for orientation and mobility, as described in Rule 6A-4.01794, FAC, Specialization Requirements for the Orientation and Mobility Endorsement--Academic Class. This requirement is indicated in the course code directory for the following courses:

- o 7763060 Orientation and Mobility: PK-5
- o 7863060 Orientation and Mobility: 6 – 8
- o 7963060 Orientation and Mobility Skills

The provision for the courses to be taught by a teacher of the visually impaired will be removed, as per the *Florida Course Descriptions, Exceptional Student Education, 1999 Revisions* of courses 7863060 and 7963060. Both state:

Due to safety considerations, training students with visual impairments for independent travel requires a fully trained orientation and mobility instructor.

Teachers of the visually impaired (TVI) who are not endorsed have the opportunity to participate in orientation and mobility training funded through the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

BAMBI J. LOCKMAN

Chief

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services

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and offered by Florida State University. This program enables TVIs to earn their endorsement during weekends in a location near their home or district. TVIs who participate in this training program are enrolled at Florida State University and receive six (6) credit hours upon completion of both the beginning and advanced orientation and mobility for courses. TVIs may then complete either a 120-hour internship in order to complete the endorsement program or a 350-hour internship in order to fulfill the requirements toward certification by the Academy of Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP), a national certifying body for orientation and mobility specialists. Upon completion of the courses and the internship, teachers would be eligible for Florida's endorsement in orientation and mobility. For more information about the program, please contact Dr. Sandra Lewis, by telephone at (850) 644-8409 or by electronic mail at lewis@coe.fsu.edu.

If you have any questions about the contents of this memorandum, please contact Ms. Dawn Saunders, Program Specialist, by telephone at (850) 245-0478 or by electronic mail at Dawn.Saunders@fldoe.org.

BJL/dsr