

Become an Orientation and Mobility Specialist



Looking to become part of a unique and in-demand field of blind and low vision education? The Washington State School for the Blind's Vision Mentorship & Grant Program can help.

In collaboration with OSPI, WSDS, and Portland State University, we provide partial and in some cases full support to earn your ESA certification in Orientation and Mobility.

Over the past nine years, we've helped launch the careers of over 50 new professionals in this field. Come be a part of this growing community and shape the future for blind and low vision learners!

Common questions:

Who is qualified to apply?

Any Washington State individual with a bachelor's degree is eligible for this graduate-level certification program.

When is the application window?

Our application window opens every January. All applications must be submitted by April 1st. You must be admitted to the program before being considered for grant funding.

What factors decide if I receive grant funding?

The main goal of this grant is to fill vacant positions or to train orientation and mobility specialists in districts or regions experiencing considerable caseload growth. Additionally, we look at educational experience and district support for obtaining practicum hours.

What does the grant pay for?

Depending upon the scholarship awarded, through WSDS or PSU, the grant pays anywhere from 80% to 100% of the tuition and fees. Most books are digitally available at no additional cost through the PSU library. The grant does not cover travel expenses for the required in-person cane class. There are options to take the cane class in Portland or in Seattle.

Can I be hired as a conditionally-certified O&M specialist while pursuing this program?

No, Orientation and Mobility services involve a significant level of responsibility and safety risk. Because O&M specialists teach skills in real-world environments such as streets, intersections, and public transportation systems, full completion of the certification program and achievement of certification are required before assuming the job title of Orientation and Mobility Specialist.

How do I get mentor support?

Completing practicum hours in O&M requires an on-site mentor. Some districts already have O&M specialists on staff who can serve in this role. If your district does not have access to an on-site mentor, the WSSB Mentorship Program can provide one at no cost. Please note that in-person mentorship availability is limited, and arrangements must be made prior to grant selection.

How long is the program and what is required?

The program lasts anywhere from 12-18 months depending upon any previous coursework that an applicant has. For example, Teachers of the Blind and Low Vision with recent coursework may transfer in up to 9 credits towards their graduate certificate. There is a 400 hour practicum that can often be completed within the applicant's school or district.

How can I get started?

- Speak with your supervisor about your interest and potential employment opportunities
- Contact Joe Dlugo at the WSSB Mentorship and Grant Program: joe.dlugo@wssb.wa.gov
- Prepare your application and materials by the April 1st due date
- Upon acceptance to the program, you will receive a questionnaire. Return the questionnaire to be considered for grant funding, which is decided in late April

[Apply for the Portland State University Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist program](#)

What if I have additional questions?

Contact Amy Parker at the PSU O&M Program: atp5@pdx.edu

[Visit the Mentorship and Grant Program web page](#)