Mobility Ready for College?
What’s O&M got to do with it?
College is stressful enough without having to work on basic O&M skills!

- Problems:
  - Students are not prepared for real world O&M.
  - Students are not prepared for independent skills and advocacy needed for College

- No Teacher of Visually Impaired/TVIs
- No Parents
- No Paras
- No SPED Team
But Student looks fine!

- Following
- Faking
- Familiar vs unfamiliar
- Inside travel is different

- Is the student using reliable methods of navigation and orientation in School or around Community?

- Always preparing for the next environment!
Education competency is not the only skill a student will need to succeed in college!

- Social Skills
- Travel Skills
- Advocacy Skills
Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic...

- What will you be using from your school career each day?
  - Reading
  - Writing
  - Math
  - Typing
O&M is a Lifetime Skill…..

- Long Cane Training
- Complex street crossing
- Pedestrian skills
- Use of public transportation
- Wayfinding
- Advocacy
- Route Planning
- Exploring—never lost!
Massachusetts O&M Model

- School Systems provide O&M services.
- Adult O&M is provided by the State Agency for the Blind.
- Limited communication between groups!
Adult O&M College Training Skills

- There is an expectation that a student will only need a familiarization to the college, not extensive O&M training.
A student should be able to accurately appraise their level of independence in the following areas:

- Unfamiliar environments
- Crossing complex street intersections
- Cane skills
- Public transit
- Travel in weather conditions—rain, snow, cold, wind, etc.
A High School Student should

- Know who, how and when to ask for help
- Know how and when to decline help
- Uses a variety of tools and techniques
- Know of and how to contact agencies that support individuals with visual disability
- Know how to maintain and replace devices (Cane, technology, monocular, etc.)
- Make informed decisions
High School O&M

- Preparing for the real world of college, work, living away from family and friends.
- Be able to use complex orientation skills
  - GPS and advanced technology for functional travel and route planning
- Plan and execute functional community travel independently
- Demonstrate self-advocacy skills such as soliciting assistance, interacting with adult agencies, etc.
Independent O&M Travel Skills?

- Traveling by self without friends or family?
- Route Planning?
- Public transit?
  - Uber/shared rides
  - Paratransit
- Crossing streets?
  - Traffic Control?
  - Complex Intersections?

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Transition and O&M

- Don’t wait to contact MCB for transition services discussion.
- Never assume everything is taken care of.
- Transition connections to adult agencies for otherwise typical students should start in middle school.
- Contact MCB O&M Dept. October of Senior year.
- HS COMS should prepare transition report for new COMS.
Guide Dogs......

- Students thinking of getting a guide dog should apply for training;
  - The summer before HS senior year or
  - After 1st year of college.
What Do You Need?

- Learning to ask the right questions.
- Advocacy
To do list

- Apply for Travel Transit Pass
  - Para Transit

- Identification
  - Obtain DMV State Real ID card
  - Consider getting a passport
Advocacy

- Student should be able to explain eye condition and functional issues.
Develop Realistic Accessibility Plan for College

- O&M training request
- How to request books? (Wait time?)
- How to make introductions to teachers?
- Types of communications with school personal?
  - Email, Text, Phone
  - Office hours?
O&M Considerations when choosing colleges:
- Size
- Location
- Walkability
- Transportation

Meet with Disability Student Services at every college:
- Have they ever worked with a student with legal blindness?
  - What accommodations were provided?
  - What issues came up?
Learn about the college culture

- Commuter college?
  - Do students stay on campus during the weekend?
  - Are there planned activities on campus during the week & on weekends?

- Where do folks study?
  - Dorm room
  - Library
  - Quiet dorms
Orientation

- Review where the dining rooms & classes are in relation to dorm location.
- What are the transportation options on campus?
- Pedestrian/walking routes?
Transit options

- On campus
- Off campus
- Transit plan to get home.
- Develop winter travel plan around campus and to home.
Dorm Rooms

- Lighting issues
- Plugs
- Desk size
- Storage issues
- Roommates & communication
Plan Ahead!

- Be respectful of time needed for an accommodation
- Self advocate when needs are not met and know where to seek help to resolve issues
- Communicate with professors, disability services, and dorm mates.
- Have a back up plan when something doesn’t work out.....
Turning 18

- Ready or not, students are now legally an adult!
  - You sign it, you are responsible.
  - Read & respond to emails.
  - Deadlines mean something.
  - Don’t wait until the last month of semester to get help!
  - Parents can’t get health or grade information.
Develop Organization System

- Will need to keep track of dorm/room key
- College ID
- Scheduling of classes
- Banking/money
Should Request ASAP:

- Student now needs to coordinate own O&M requests.
  - Do not wait until the last minute....

- Will need:
  - Class schedule and booklist
  - Early move in date
  - Schedule O&M
How to get around in eating areas?

- Most colleges have buffet and multi food areas to select from.
- COVID changes.....
College Routes

- Class Location
- Dorm Location
- Dining Hall Locations
- Surrounding Community
- Transit options on Campus
Signage

- Labeling of dorm rooms....
- Classrooms
- Bathrooms
- Laundry Room
- Mailboxes
Communication

- How to get information?
- Campus news
- Dorm news
Bathrooms

- Hall/Suite
- Contrast
- Lighting?
Showers
Fire Exits
O&M at College

- Dress for weather
- Bring marking items
- Recording device
- Have sunglasses, low vision items, flashlight, backpack, etc.
- Have a back-up cane-at college & home
Be Prepared

- There will be problems.
  - How to fix assistive tech?
    - Any upgrades will impact assistive tech.
- Don’t wait until it is too late to fix a problem or issue.
  - Getting materials from College Instructors
    - In servicing College Staff on vision needs.
      - Resource list on how to make lessons accessible to your needs.
- Have patience
- Don’t assume the issue has been taken care of.
- Follow up, follow up, follow up.
Suggestion: Early Action

- Early Action allows students to apply to as many colleges as they want and are not obligated to attend if admitted.
  - Applications due in Fall.
  - Acceptance notifications begin in Jan.
  - Students have until May 1st to make a choice.
Thank you for attending

- Massachusetts Commission for the Blind O&M Department.
  - Mass.gov/mcb
  - MCBinfo@mass.gov
  - 617-626-7581

- Grace Cummings COMS
- Cindy Curran COMS
- Cynthia Guise COMS
- Michael Dionne COMS
- Meg Robertson COMS
Handouts

- PDF Copy of this PowerPoint presentation.
- COMS TVI OM Skill College List
- Are You Ready for College?
- Customized Transportation Assessment
- Uber Checklist

- Email Meg.Robertson@mass.gov
Discussion....