



## Coronavirus (COVID-19) Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Risk Assessment Guidance

[Habilitation VI UK](#) originally developed the document on risk assessment and has graciously given permission to Minnesota Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) to revise it to fit our state's need.

This best practice guidance document relates to children and young people whose orientation and mobility training requires hands-on instruction or close physical distance during their lessons.

Risks must be assessed by the COMS and, if they deem it appropriate and safe to continue, these recommendations are the precautions that can be taken to mitigate those risks. COMS will need to follow Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recommendations on an on-going basis as the situation evolves.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed By: \_\_\_\_\_

	Hazards Identified	Responsibility	Strategies to Implement
1.	The potential health risks to the individual from coronavirus (COVID-19), bearing in mind any underlying health conditions.	Student COMS	<p>The CDC has advised us to follow the generic guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep hands and face as clean as possible.</li> <li>• Wash hands regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.</li> <li>• Use a hand sanitizer (at least 60 percent alcohol) where there are no facilities to wash hands—to be used when entering and exiting the school building.</li> <li>• Use a face covering in public areas, <i>Note: children under the age of two should not have their faces covered, and nor should elementary age children who do not have someone supervising them. Face coverings are not a substitute for physical distancing (Refer to <a href="#">2021 School Planning Guide</a> for acceptable face coverings.)</i></li> <li>• Maintain a physical distance of six (6) feet apart—individuals should not be too close to each other for more than a short period of time.</li> <li>• Touching of the face should be avoided.</li> <li>• Clothing should be washed regularly.</li> <li>• Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue away in a trash receptacle immediately.</li> </ul>

	<b>Hazards Identified</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Strategies to Implement</b>
<b>2.</b>	The risk to the individual if some or all of the elements in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) cannot be delivered for the time being and the risk if they cannot be delivered in the normal manner or in the usual training setting (community, public transportation, etc.)	COMS	<p>The CDC has advised to use public/school bus transportation by using good hygiene practices and care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss with the school district and parents the options for transporting student to/from school/lesson by taxi or car during the semester or year as part of any transition.</li> <li>• Direct 1:1 training maybe delayed as a result of a graduated approach to going back to school—discuss a transition plan which may involve working with the student in the school building during the summer/fall to complete route familiarization training.</li> </ul>
<b>3.</b>	The potential impact of the student’s well-being from changes to routine or the way in which service is delivered.	COMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the emotional impact with parents and the student and design a plan of training which may incorporate links with district mental health and counseling services.</li> <li>• Design a plan of intervention which may include using technology, to conduct interviews and discussions with the students and their parents e.g. Skype, Google Meet, Zoom to carry out 1:1 assessments or training requirements to reduce the need for home visits.</li> <li>• Consider how to encourage young students to learn and practice safe hygiene and physical distancing through games, repetition and song.</li> </ul>

	<b>Hazards Identified</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Strategies to Implement</b>
4.	The potential risk where children and young people whose condition prevents or inhibits self-regulation and whose behaviors cannot be supported or managed by the COMS during the O&M lesson.	COMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss with parents how the student can be best supported.</li> <li>• Ensure a paraprofessional can support the 1:1 session as an observer to ensure any future learning can be adapted to the needs of the student. (Paraprofessional should also be wearing a face covering.)</li> <li>• Consider how to encourage young children to learn and practice good hygiene habits through games, song and repetition.</li> </ul>

## Mobility Training

*COMS will maintain their distance from people in the workplace, including those working in schools.*

*Transmission is affected by both duration and proximity of contact; individuals should not be within close proximity for more than a short period of time.*

	<b>Hazards Identified</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Strategies to Implement</b>
5.	Orientation and Mobility within the classroom—difficulties physical distancing and contact with others.	COMS Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An easy access and clear route from the door to the desk and chair, removing any clutter or furniture in the pathway.</li> <li>• Recommend a cued route system leading into the classroom, with possibly an audio system for the student to detect six (6) foot safe distance or verbal support from their sighted peers.</li> </ul>

	<b>Hazards Identified</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Strategies to Implement</b>
6.	Orientation within school—gauging physical distance, contact with others, negotiating doors.	School Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommend a reduced number of students moving around the school at any one time, e.g. staggered break and lunchtimes.</li> <li>• Student keeps six (6) foot physical distance from other students/staff.</li> <li>• A one-way system throughout the school will prevent students bumping into one another.</li> <li>• Staff/students open doors to reduce the contact and ease safe navigation.</li> <li>• Staff remain to the side of the student, not facing them wherever possible.</li> <li>• A buddy system may help with sighted peer support to help maintain appropriate physical distance from other students.</li> <li>• Discussion between staff and students about physical distancing and the need to assist the student who is blind in maintaining six (6) foot distance with peers.</li> </ul>
7.	Orientation and Mobility within the playground— safe distance to play and move around, contact with others, accidents occurring from bumping into others	School Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School to stagger break times to avoid heavy concentration of numbers of students entering/exiting the building.</li> <li>• Consider how play equipment is used ensuring it is appropriately cleaned between groups of children using it, and that multiple groups do not use it simultaneously.</li> <li>• Reduce the volume of equipment in use. Plan 72 hours between equipment swaps. (Refer to <a href="#">MDH Playground Guidance</a>.)</li> <li>• Consider low contact organized games, such as hopscotch, often drawn on the playground surface (elementary years)— either existing or draw with high contrast markers/tactile markers.</li> <li>• School to consider several exits and entrances to avoid high volume of passing lines into and out of the building.</li> </ul>

	<b>Hazards Identified</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Strategies to Implement</b>
8.	Human Guide: close and physical contact between the guiding person/COMS, evidence that COVID-19 stays on clothing/fabric.	School Staff  COMS	<p>Human guide techniques to be used only where verbal instructions are insufficient to keep the student safe from harm.</p> <p>If the technique is deemed necessary, the technique will remain as typically performed. However, the following guidelines must be enforced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guide and student must wash their hands regularly (preferably before and after guide technique is used within the lesson).</li> <li>• Stand side to side and avoid face to face instruction.</li> <li>• Consider reducing the amount of time for each guidance if possible, offering verbal instruction or trailing techniques as alternatives.</li> <li>• Use hand sanitizer (at least 60 percent alcohol) if soap and water are unavailable.</li> <li>• Both guide and student wear a cloth face covering which covers their nose and mouth.</li> <li>• Clothing should be changed daily for both student and guide.</li> <li>• Consideration around a discussion with the student about sneezing and coughing into a tissue or the elbow of their sleeve—guide may need some adaptation when this happens.</li> <li>• In this case—discussion with the student around where is most comfortable on the arm but avoiding the elbow area—using the required grip on the upper arm or lower forearm; or wrist with younger students. For older and taller students consider using the shoulder of the guide.</li> </ul>

	<b>Hazards Identified</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Strategies to Implement</b>
<b>9.</b>	Cane Travel Training: close contact with student to ensure safety at all times, hand over hand techniques to reinforce instruction.	COMS Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face covering to be worn by student and COMS.</li> <li>• Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after the lesson.</li> <li>• A cane can be used to ensure safe distance between COMS and student to ensure the student stays on a safe line of travel (especially on narrow sidewalks).</li> <li>• Verbal communication to be used throughout the session, checking students' level of learning to ensure their understanding of the next steps.</li> <li>• Stand to the side of the student and avoid face to face instruction where possible.</li> <li>• Consider reducing the lesson time.</li> <li>• Consider having time in the fresh air outside within the lesson time.</li> </ul>
<b>10.</b>	Street Crossings: close supervision with student/COMS to prevent student from stepping into street when unsafe to do so.	COMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMS to stand to the side of the student when giving instruction.</li> <li>• Significantly reduce the amount of time required to stand within the recommended six (6) foot distance.</li> <li>• COMS to carry hand sanitizer (60 percent alcohol) on all lessons outside of school or the student's home.</li> </ul>

	<b>Hazards Identified</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Strategies to Implement</b>
11.	Orientation and Mobility Instruction: close contact between COMS and student when teaching safe routes in the community, close contact with members of the community—student unable to gauge how close the public are moving around them.	COMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preferably choose quieter times to complete training in community areas.</li> <li>• Where a student does not usually use a cane, consider using an identification cane to help maintain physical distance between the student and members of the public.</li> <li>• Demonstrate a safe technique which will enable distance between the student and public.</li> <li>• Teach the student techniques on how to politely ask for more space when moving around in public areas, or move to the side to ensure others have the same level of safety.</li> </ul> <p>Consideration to the planning of the lesson, when role-playing scenarios where their actions are challenged by anxious members of the public. How to explain, calm a situation, for example.</p>
12.	Trailing Techniques: student touching unclean walls, door handles, handrails.	COMS	<p>Whenever possible students should be using their cane when moving around school.</p> <p>Trailing techniques are a necessary part of using their cane. However, some students may not use a cane—in this case, consider the student using an identification cane to trail, rather than using their hands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach the student how to trail using an identification cane.</li> <li>• If the student refuses or has complex needs and it is deemed unsafe for them to use a cane, hand washing hygiene procedures need to be reinforced before and after each lesson—regular hand washing throughout the day.</li> </ul>

	Hazards Identified	Responsibility	Strategies to Implement
13.	<p>Vehicle Negotiation/Passenger Skills: close proximity between student and COMS when checking safety of seat belt, touching surfaces of the car, close proximity within the space of the car.</p> <p><i>The coronavirus can remain on surfaces for up to 72 hours—CDC</i></p>	COMS	<p><i>Making contact safer by redesigning public and workspaces—increasing ventilation.</i></p> <p>Some students may need to travel by taxi/Uber/school vehicle to the training areas, e.g., transition to a new school. The COMS will need to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the student able to tolerate a face covering for the travel time within the vehicle?</li> <li>• Consider cordoning off seats and eliminating face to face seating, where vehicle capacity allows, to help passengers spread out.</li> </ul> <p>COMS to consider using disinfectant wipes to regularly clean contact areas of the vehicle, e.g., seatbelts, car seats, door handles, etc.</p> <p>COMS to ensure, student, and accompanying paraprofessional wash hands before and after each lesson.</p> <p>COMS to consider ventilation levels in the vehicle—opening windows, air vents to allow natural flow of air into and out of the car.</p> <p>Consider short trips only.</p> <p>Consideration for consulting with parents and requesting them to transport their own child/children to the education setting for any transition route familiarization to a new school or to the training area.</p>

## Community/Shopping Skills

	Hazards Identified	Responsibility	Strategies to Implement
14.	<p>Money Management:            contact of money in hands  <i>The World Health Organization said at the beginning of March 2020, in response to a question about whether banknotes could spread the coronavirus, their spokesperson said “yes it is possible and it’s a good question. We know that money changes hands frequently and can pick up all sorts of bacteria and viruses...where possible it’s a good idea to use contactless payments.”</i></p>	COMS	<p>Where lessons on identifying money are planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-wash a set of coins to be used within the lesson—and wash again after the lesson, using soap and water for at least 20 seconds.</li> <li>• Avoid using resources that are made of fabric.</li> <li>• Student and COMS to wash hands with soap and water before and after the lesson.</li> <li>• Avoid using circulated paper money at this time. If paper money is used, be sure to wash hands using soap and water for at least 20 seconds.</li> <li>• For older students it may be appropriate to teach them about contactless payment (debit, credit, phone apps).</li> </ul>
15.	<p>Asking for Help: difficulties of student to gauge close proximity of people helping them.</p>	COMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMS to consider training student to use an identification cane in stores and community areas to avoid close contact with the public.</li> <li>• Otherwise advise on spatial awareness training and the need/prevalence at this time for physical distancing.</li> <li>• COMS to assess the ability of the student to plan an appropriate intervention for spatial awareness training and physical distancing.</li> <li>• Training will involve the student asking for public to remain six (6) feet away from them and to stand at the side of them where possible.</li> </ul>

	<b>Hazards Identified</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Strategies to Implement</b>
16.	Using a Shopping Basket/Cart: touching surface of handles, unable to locate cleaning equipment in store for cart or basket handles.	COMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMS to issue hand sanitizer wipes for the student to wipe the basket or cart.</li> <li>• COMS to teach student the route to the sanitizing area of the store (usually at the entrance).</li> <li>• COMS to reach the student about asking for help techniques—for store staff to assist wiping the basket or cart for the student if they are unable to do it for themselves, to remain six (6) feet away and to the side of the student.</li> </ul>
17.	Standing in a Line: close proximity of public, unable to see the public safety arrows on the floor for safe distancing.	COMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMS to advise store on high contrast/tactile arrows to assist users with visual impairments.</li> <li>• COMS to teach student on landmarks they can use to assist with gauging areas to stand in line.</li> <li>• COMS to consider student using an identification cane or shopping cart for gauging physical distance between the student and members of the public.</li> </ul>
18.	Using an Elevator or Escalator: close proximity of public, unable to determine how many people are in the elevator.	COMS	<p>Where possible the student should use the least congested areas, such as stairs to avoid close proximity spaces, e.g., elevators. Where cane travel involves elevators and escalators the following strategies are recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To wait between 5-10 seconds before getting on the escalator, to allow six (6) feet of space between the student and the public using the escalator in front of them, asking the public behind them to do the same, to give them enough time to get on safely.</li> <li>• To use their cane as per regular training techniques.</li> <li>• To avoid getting into a congested elevator, waiting for the next one if there is less than three (3) feet of space.</li> </ul>

## Public Transportation

Only essential mobility training on public transportation should be given to students at this time.

Alternative arrangements should be sought first.

Priority will then be given to students who are transitioning to college.

Essential criteria of the student’s orientation and mobility skill sets should be assessed before training begins:

- They must be a confident traveler and have had previous mobility training.
- They must be a confident cane traveler (if they use a cane).
- The student must be confident to ask for help from the public/bus driver.
- They have a bus/train pass/or will be using contactless payment.

	Hazards Identified	Responsibility	Strategies to Implement
19.	Waiting for the Bus/Train: difficulties gauging the end of the line and maintaining six (6) foot distance.	COMS Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To follow CDC guidelines for physical distancing and the guidance provided by the transportation company on numbers on the bus/train and seating arrangements.</li> <li>• Training plans need to be agreed by parents which may include parents supporting the student in the bus line and getting on the bus.</li> <li>• Consideration to be given on the number, frequency and lesson times to achieve a safe outcome.</li> <li>• Consideration to be given on cane technique and adaptations to techniques to extend the cane further in front of the student to allow a safe distance between themselves and the public.</li> </ul>
20.	Getting On/Off Bus/Train: gauging space between student and other people getting on/off public transportation, asking for help and keeping safe distance.	COMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student to check verbally with other passengers to gauge physical distance between themselves and others.</li> <li>• To use full extension of cane.</li> <li>• COMS to keep a safe distance behind the student and give verbal instructions when necessary.</li> </ul>

	<b>Hazards Identified</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Strategies to Implement</b>
<b>21.</b>	Locating Scanner Machine/Paying: touching unclean surfaces trying to locate the scanner, members of the public reaching out to help—close contact.	COMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the student is unable to locate the scanner—consider them giving their card to the driver to scan, rather than use trailing techniques on surfaces of the bus.</li> <li>• Encourage the student to wipe the card with a disinfectant wipe once seated and before placing the card in their pocket/wallet/purse.</li> <li>• Consider hand washing using soap and water for at least 20 seconds upon arrival at destination.</li> </ul>
<b>22.</b>	Locating an Empty Seat: keeping safe distance, difficulties locating an empty seat, gauging whether the seat is six (6) feet from fellow passengers.	COMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COMS to sit six (6) feet away from student, preferably on a seat opposite side of bus/train to give instructions and check student understanding.</li> <li>• Otherwise to follow normal guidelines of instruction/practice—student to sit on the right side of the bus (on the side with the doors)—requiring the ability of the student to ask bus driver/passengers for cooperation with this.</li> </ul>
<b>23.</b>	Due to Social Distancing: buses will reduce their capacity to passengers—further increasing waiting times.	COMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each route will present a different experience for the student, therefore, include discussion/training around this in planning a route.</li> <li>• Expect that overall route time may be longer as a result of the reduced number of passengers allowed on board the bus at any given time.</li> <li>• Priority should be given to passengers with disabilities, but may not always be possible.</li> <li>• Consideration should be given to getting on the bus at an alternative bus stop which may be quieter—consider several possible options.</li> </ul>

## Independent Living Skills

*The CDC states there is some evidence that the COVID-19 virus can survive on surfaces for a period of time.*

	<b>Hazards Identified</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Strategies to Implement</b>
<b>24.</b>	Dressing skills, using cutlery, making a drink and a snack; brushing teeth.	COMS Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consider whether this is a lesson that can be done at home with parents—using technology to either stream live video calls or record training videos to support parents who can then complete the work with their child.</li><li>• Consideration to be given to any equipment issued for use. To deliver washed and cleaned and delivered in zip-lock bags if possible. Any returned equipment needs to be washed and cleaned.</li><li>• Avoid the use of soft toys or those resources with fabric.</li></ul>