

More Than A Cane:

The ability to travel independently is learned through a series of stages from infancy to adulthood. For the child with a visual impairment, questions and decisions will arise which relate to the use of travel tools such as a cane, guide dog and low vision devices.

Move and Explore:

The Visual Impairment Program also promotes development of early orientation and mobility skills through our 'Move and Explore' program. This new initiative enables families, their young children and community professionals to get together with vision team members and orientation and mobility instructors for activities and learning about O&M concepts.

Preschool Orientation and Mobility:

Children from 36 months of age to school entry may be eligible for service. Contracted services are arranged by Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children. Services may include a formal O&M assessment from an O&M Instructor. With family involvement, a service plan may then be developed targeting specific skills to promote independent travel.

School Age Orientation and Mobility:

The B.C. Ministry of Education funds Orientation and Mobility service for students with a visual impairment. For information, contact your school district Vision Teacher or Special Services Coordinator.

About Sunny Hill

Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children is a provincial facility offering specialized services to children with disabilities, their families and communities throughout British Columbia. Using a family-centred approach, Sunny Hill helps promote the healthy development of children and youth by supporting families and community service providers in their efforts. It is also a resource for educational services and information about disabilities. Services are delivered close to home in a child's community, or on site at Sunny Hill, located in Vancouver.

How To Contact Us

Sunny Hill Health Centre For Children

3644 Slocan Street, Vancouver, BC V5M 3E8

Phone: (604) 453-8300

Toll Free: 1-888-300-3088

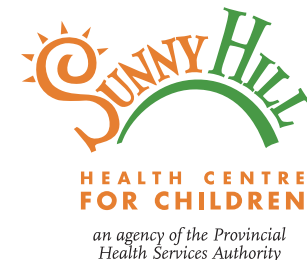
Fax: (604) 453-8301

www.bcchildrens.ca

*Promoting Better Health for Children with Disabilities
through Clinical Services, Education and Research*



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What Is It?:

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) is the development of travel skills which support safe and independent movement of individuals who are blind or have a visual impairment.

Through purposeful movement a child can explore and locate objects or destinations, and this can help develop an understanding about the surrounding world.

Orientation and Mobility instruction includes the training of young children who are blind or have low vision. This training is guided by the natural stages of a child's development.

Orientation:

Orientation refers to the thinking part of travel. It involves knowing where you are, knowing what is around you and knowing how to move to a desired destination. Orientation includes the use of language, understanding cause and effect and concept development. In addition, orientation involves an awareness of body parts, developing sensory skills, motor memory and learning to use landmarks to assist travel.

Mobility:

Mobility refers to the physical part of travel. It includes confident, safe and efficient movement from one place to another. A child's strength, balance, level of independence and awareness of dangers can affect their travel. Confidence and safe travel may be influenced by the setting, time of travel, parent or child attitudes and the selective use of adaptive skills or equipment.



We All Do It! You walk or wheel into a room while avoiding obstacles (mobility), survey the room and compare what you see, hear and feel with what you know (orientation) and then begin to play or move on. That's Orientation and Mobility!

Stages of Development:

As children grow and develop, they experience many changes. Part of their development will include participation in activities that are thought of as significant milestones. These activities may include going down a slide, riding a tricycle or bicycle, crossing a street and taking a bus. For all children, particularly those with vision loss, encouragement and support are needed to accomplish the challenge of travelling beyond the home and into the community.

Infants:

This period of time provides an ideal opportunity to guide the infant through sensory and motor experiences such as reaching, rolling and crawling. A baby learns about his body and the environment through partial sight, hearing your voice and supporting purposeful movement i.e. reaching to a parent or toy. Establishing predictable routines are helpful in making sense of the world around him.

Toddlers:

Toddlers need to explore and release physical energy to allow for healthy development. A visual impairment can reduce information that encourages exploration and travel. As motor skills develop, push toys and trailing skills and guiding assistance can increase a child's travel confidence and love of movement.



Preschoolers:

This age group is often curious, full of questions and energy. Travel in the home and preschool settings should include learning about how things work and where to find them. The introduction of a tricycle and possibly a kiddie cane may be helpful.

School Age:

To participate in school and community activities, a child needs to develop skills for independent travel. Learning to safely cross residential streets can allow for visiting friends, walking to school or going to the local store. The ability to understand directions, interpret sensory information and identify landmarks is important. Participation in recreational activities may support learning rules and building on spatial concepts. Effective use of a cane or low vision device can be introduced at this time.

Teens:

This stage in school often includes a need for acceptance, testing boundaries and an increased need for independence. To fully participate in social and recreational activities, basic travel skills may need to be increased. This can include planning travel options, effective use of a cane, using public transit and taxis.

