



Orientation and Mobility Division Update

www.aerbvi.org/OandM

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From the Chair

I am honored to serve as the Chair of the O&M Division. I would also like to welcome all of the new and returning members of the Executive Committee.

Chair	Justin Kaiser jkaiser@uscupstate.edu
Past Chair	Susan Langendonk susanlangendonk@gmail.com
Chair Elect	Chris Tabb tabbc@tsbvi.edu
Secretary	Kathryn Botsford kdbotsford.ver@gmail.com
Treasurer	Susan Bradley bradlesk@aol.com
District 1	Loana Mason loanam@nmsu.edu
District 2	John McAllister jwmcallister@ualr.edu
District 3	Margaret Winn margaretkwinn@gmail.com
District 4	Julie Boren borenom1@verizon.net
District 5	JoAnne Chalom jchalom@infocusmobility.com
District 6	Anthony Nigro anigromobility@gmail.com

Jenny Wheeler, who had been elected as Treasurer, had to resign her position because of unforeseen circumstances and she felt that she could not adequately serve as required. The Executive Committee has appointed Susan Bradley and thanks her for agreeing to serve as the O&M Division Treasurer.

Susan Bradley is a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. She retired from the public school system with over 32 years experience and has been the Orientation and Mobility Consultant for the Michigan Department of Education-Low Incidence Outreach (MDE-LIO) since 2007. She is a charter member of AER and has been a chapter president, chapter board member and is currently the membership chairperson for Michigan AER.

It was great to see so many O&M professionals at the AER international Conference this summer. There were a number of interesting sessions on various O&M topics. We hope to offer some of the more innovative topics as part of our watercooler sessions over the next year. The O&M Division awards banquet, organized by Gala Brooks, was fantastic and these details can be seen in other parts of this newsletter.

We have a number of tasks that we are undertaking to improve the O&M Division and the O&M profession overall.

Website

The O&M Division website will be one of the first issues that needs to be addressed. We will be updating the information, finding ways to make it more user-friendly, adding material that is more useful to the membership, and ensuring that nothing was lost from the old version of the website. We hope to include the following as part of the website: preferred practices, professional development opportunities, information for administrators' reference, current tasks the division is working on, and the option to request a local O&M professional to come out and speak somewhere. Chris Tabb, the O&M Division Chair Elect, is coordinating this process and welcomes input from the membership.

This will be a slow process, but we do want to make sure we do it right. There will also be an O&M Division Facebook group beginning sometime this fall and we encourage everyone to join and connect through this resource.

O&M Preferred Providers

The O&M Division has also undertaken a project to identify who is able to provide O&M services in each state. Some states have started to list Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists as the Preferred Provider for services in their state. For example, Pennsylvania has done this by listing COMS as the Preferred Provider through IDEA. The O&M Division will begin a project to identify who is able to provide services state by state and how to get certified O&M instructors listed as part of this requirement. I am looking for volunteers to assist with this project in every state and please let me know if you are interested.

Our Conference Committee has been formed and we have begun to plan for the AER International O&M Conference in Pittsburgh July 19th-22nd, 2017. There will be a call for papers coming out in the near future. I hope to see many of you there.

Most of the standing committees of the O&M Division have Chairs and committee members working on various projects. We are in need of division members who are willing to serve in this capacity to strengthen the division and our profession.

If you are interested in assisting with any division activities, please contact me at jkaiser@uscupstate.edu

Justin Kaiser
O&M Division Chair
724-562-4188

O&M Division Roundtables for Strategic Planning, Goals and Initiatives

Starting in 2014, and continuing throughout 2015, the AER O&M Division Ad Hoc Committee for Strategic Planning, Goals and Initiatives met with 1600 to 2000 O&M Specialists at conferences across the country and collected surveys about the priorities, concerns and needs of the O&M profession. Ultimately, the feedback focused on three specific areas that the Division should work on for the future. We held these three roundtable sessions at the AER International conference this summer to gather feedback on forming our strategic plan moving forward.

- The O&M Profession: A conversation about Professional Development and Preferred Practices
- The O&M Profession: Conversations about Licensure, 3rd Party Reimbursement, and University Preparation.
- The O&M Profession: A conversation about Advocacy, Awareness and Recruitment

These were moderated by Susan Langendonk, Justin Kaiser, Chris Tabb, and Lukas Franck. The O&M Specialists at these sessions were helpful by voicing their needs and concerns and providing ideas for how the O&M Division can address these areas. I do think that the leadership needs to be transparent in our decision-making and that this should be shared with the membership. The details provided below include many of the thoughts we have discussed and we will need to make decisions on how to focus our efforts.

Opportunities for Professional Development

We had discussed the idea of having the Environmental Access Committee to help present local/regional workshops on specific intersection types and analysis. This is something that had been discussed before and the division is going to work on providing. We will also continue to present watercooler sessions on unique topics of interest to the membership.

Scope of Practice and Preferred Practices

From these roundtables, many O&M Specialists were asking for a more defined scope of practice for the profession. It was also discussed that there should be a collection of assessment and instructional resources easily accessible to the membership. The scope of practice does need to be refined and this will be discussed within the division leadership to determine if this is appropriate for the O&M Division to undertake. It would be ideal to have a single resource to provide access to materials that are considered best-practice within the field, such as the Michigan O&M Severity Rating Scale, and providing feedback on the research to support their validity. This is something that we will explore and determine what could be hosted through the Division website. Along the same topic, it was suggested that there could be an online wiki that could be continuously updated and edited by division membership. While this is something that we would like to pursue, the O&M Division may not be able to host something requiring this much space through the division website.

It was also suggested that there should be a resource to state what are the common or accepted contract rates in each state. Given the number of professionals that provide contract services, this information should be able to be gathered and provided through a single online resource. I am not sure as to the division's role in this, but we will continue to discuss it.

3rd Party Reimbursement and Licensure

For third-party reimbursement and Medicaid, there was considerable discussion on this throughout the conference beyond our sessions. Montana has been using 3rd party reimbursement for O&M services and a session was presented on this at the conference as well.

A resolution on Third-Party reimbursement was passed at the AER Business meeting and this resolution is summarized as follows:

The “AER National Working Group on Third-Party Coverage for Specialized Services (working group) to consider and implement strategies to achieve third-party funding for the specialized services provided by vision rehabilitation professionals.”

While I anticipate the O&M Division being active in resolving this issue, the beginning stages of this process should be achieved through this resolution. Third-Party reimbursement will certainly be a clear part of our strategic plan.

Through this process, we discussed the cost and benefits of licensure for our profession. Licensure had typically been discussed as a way to achieve 3rd party reimbursement, but 3rd party reimbursement can be achieved through other avenues without licensure as in Montana. Additionally, licensure legislation so far has been unsuccessful. Licensure could have other benefits including protection from other professionals (OTs, PTs, etc.) providing O&M services. However, this is an area that is beyond what the O&M Division has resources to advocate for.

Advocacy and Awareness

As part of the roundtables, we discussed how the O&M Division could promote advocacy and awareness including providing resources for working with school districts, having tables or posters at OT and PT conferences, and writing a publication through AARP magazine. Recruitment ideas that were discussed included getting O&M listed in Occupational Indexes and databases, discussing O&M with future educator associations, recruiting students that were not accepted into competitive programs like nursing or occupational therapy, and talking to academic advisors about O&M as a career option. These are all things that we will discuss within the Executive Committee and as part of this strategic planning process.

Liability Insurance

Liability insurance through Forest T. Jones was a major concern of many professionals. The process of looking for liability insurance options to more adequately cover the responsibilities of O&M Specialists (for student transportation, written documents, etc.) and other VI professionals has already begun through AER. We will continue to advocate for the needs of O&M professionals and what needs to be included in a liability insurance policy.

Summary

Our Ad Hoc Committee will continue to meet and formally create a strategic plan to address these concerns setting clear goals for what the O&M Division should focus on for the future. Some of these initiatives will be implemented over the next year because these are immediate needs that should be addressed. Of the ideas discussed above and deemed to be outside of the purview of the O&M division, these can still be pursued and advocated for through collaborative efforts with other organizations that have more resources. We plan to present the new O&M Division Strategic Plan and Goals at the AER International O&M 2017 Conference in Pittsburgh.

We are currently looking for division members to help us in planning this process and what we need to do to accomplish these goals in the future. If you are interested in helping in this process, please contact me at jkaiser@uscupstate.edu

Justin Kaiser

Award Winners Announced!

O&M Division Awards Ceremony

The O&M Division Awards Ceremony at the 2016 AER Conference was well attended. Gala Brooks, the Awards Committee Chair, organized the presentations of the following awards for the well-deserving recipients.

Nominating letters and recipient speeches are posted on the division website along with pictures of the recipients at the ceremony. This information can be viewed at:

<https://aerbvi.org/about/divisions/orientation-mobility-division/awards/>

Orientation & Mobility Citation of Excellence



Gala Brooks presents the Award to Raychel Callary

The first Orientation and Mobility Citation of Excellence was first presented in 1986. The criteria states that this award will be presented to a younger member of the profession whose present excellent teaching records foreshadow a promising career in our profession. The nominee must be teaching fewer than 10 years.

The winner is Raychel Callary. For the complete transcript of the presentation, please go to our website <https://aerbvi.org/about/divisions/orientation-mobility-division/awards/>

Sandy Kronick Distinguished Service Award.



Chris Tabb presents the Award to Marjie Wood

In 1994, the Kronick Award was established to recognize professionals who demonstrate distinguished service in O&M through a long-term commitment to direct service.

The winner is Marjie Wood. For the complete transcript of the presentation, please go to our website <https://aerbvi.org/about/divisions/orientation-mobility-division/awards/>

The Lawrence E. Blaha Memorial Award



Nora Griffin-Shirley presents the Award to Sandy Rosen

This award honors Lawrence E. Blaha and those who receive it for their outstanding contributions to the profession, and who are passionate and dedicated to the profession of Orientation and Mobility. The winner is Sandy Rosen. For the complete transcript of the presentation, please go to our website <https://aerbvi.org/about/divisions/orientation-mobility-division/awards/>

DISTRICT 5 REPORT

JoAnne Chalom

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, Tennessee

As I begin my second term as District 5 Director, it has been a privilege to serve as part of the Executive Committee. During the previous term, topics that have been addressed, ranged from the ACVREP's One-time Alternative Pathway to Eligibility to finding a means to increase awareness of White Cane laws.

From my perspective, my primary responsibilities as a District Director have been two-fold. First and foremost, in order for the chair to complete his duties he should be supported by executive committee members. Assistance can vary from proofreading a document the chair has created to evaluating abstracts for the Biennial International Conference.

A secondary responsibility is networking and developing relationships with members. Many opportunities arise to attend conferences ranging from the Alabama Annual Conference, Georgia AER Annual Conference, Florida AER Conference (FAER) Conference, North Carolina Conference on Visual Impairment and Blindness (NCCVIB), La Conferencia AER-PR (Puerto Rico AER Conference) to the Southeastern Orientation and Mobility Association Conference (SOMA).

More networking opportunities abound as two state conferences are scheduled in the near future. The 2016 Tennessee AER Fall Conference is planned for September 17th, 2016 at the Tennessee School for the Blind. The theme for this conference is "I-M-ABLE." The AER Mississippi Conference is scheduled for October 20-21st, 2016 at Mississippi Library Commission in Jackson, Mississippi.

Meeting someone in person changes the relationship from one developed through email or phone conferences. If it is not possible to meet in person, then I would like extend an invitation to share any concerns with me via email. Please contact me at jchalom@infocusmobility.com. It is my pleasure to continuing to serve as Division 5 Director.



Division Executive Committee

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CHAIR ELECT: Chris Tabb
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SECRETARY: Kathryn Botsford
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TREASURER: Susan Bradley
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Visit the O&M website for a list of Committees:
<http://oandm.aerbvi.org/committees.htm>



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