

2017 CAOMS SURVEY RESULTS: TRANSPORTATION FOR O&M SERVICES

SURVEY INTRODUCTION

A group of California O&M specialists and concerned citizens have formed a committee that aims to address concerns relating to limitations in O&M service provision for school-aged students with visual impairment. In particular, there have been reports of O&M specialists who have had limitations imposed that restrict or prevent O&M instruction in the community, either due to transportation limitations or unreasonable procedures for obtaining permission for transportation.

We hope to hear from all O&Ms working in school districts, regardless of whether or not you are experiencing current limitations in service provision. Your responses to this survey will greatly assist us in determining the scope of the problems that exist in California so we can appropriately target our interventions.

QUESTION 1: PLEASE INDICATE THE SCHOOL DISTRICT IN WHICH YOU ARE EMPLOYED:

Results Summary: 64 respondents representing 53 different school districts and SELPAs in California

QUESTION 2 (OPTIONAL): PLEASE LIST YOUR NAME AND PREFERRED CONTACT INFORMATION IF YOU ARE WILLING TO DISCUSS THIS FURTHER WITH MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

Results: 40 respondents provided contact information

QUESTION 3: DO YOU FEEL YOU HAVE LIMITATIONS IN PROVIDING O&M SERVICES IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS DUE TO TRANSPORTATION RESTRICTIONS?

Results: 64 Respondents

Yes: 25 (39.06%)

No: 39 (60.94%)

QUESTION 4: IF YOU RESPONDED "YES" TO #3, PLEASE INDICATE THE NATURE OF THE RESTRICTIONS BELOW.

Results: 28 responses (Information identifying specific schools, districts, counties, SELPAs or individuals has been removed).

- not allowed to transport students. No county car to use if I was allowed.
- I've asked at a few different schools to transport kids in my car (as the schools are in very calm neighborhoods with limited options for exploration of intersections) and I am directed to the office, and at least once the office has told me they have no idea what to do. I have not pursued this very strongly, though, so perhaps I just need to jump through the requisite hoops.
- Not allowed to transport students in my own vehicle (XXXXXX).
- I used to, but said employee of district I serve moved and now there is no problem
- I am not allowed to transport students to training areas.
- ** Not yet... although with increasing legal worries of directors and other "higher ups", I am concerned that we will soon have restrictions for providing these services.
- We cannot drive students in our own personal vehicle and we are not provided with transportation to
- Driving students
- Since I am hired through the elementary district, I have undisclosed limitations with where I take students. I have never asked the high school district their policy because I believe they are more liberal. Instead I just take high school students off campus and try to limit it. I work more on a don't ask don't tell policy. If I ask, they say no. It appears that my administrators know that I do it but prefer me not to do it. Some agree with what I am doing but our special education director does not. I limit driving elementary students as much as possible too. All of the stress of trying to do my job by taking students in to the community is not necessary. I write community based goals (where program specialists attend meetings and know about), I have parents sign a form (not board certified) that says I can take their child off campus in my personal vehicle, I have the district required car insurance on my vehicle, I sign my elementary students in and out of school through the office and text parents upon leaving and arriving back to school. I do my best to be as legitimate and thorough as I can. All of that process is over course time consuming particularly now that all the schools I work at have locked campuses. I know that some districts (XXXXXXXXXX in XXXXXXXXXXXXX) have allowed O&M's to add something to the IEP stating that we transport students in the community per our goals but my district did not let me add the to IEP's. I tried and asked but they made me remove that portion.
- Not yet restricted but Risk Management is concerned and asking questions. Since more students are attending their neighborhood school several principals not familiar with VI or O&M have refused off campus lessons.
- I was not able to transport students in order to get them to important lesson locations to practice their O&M skills.

- Transporting students in my personal vehicle is not an option. I am to request a county vehicle if I wish to take students on lessons that require transportation. Vehicles are not really available as most vehicles are assigned to specific teachers/programs and are being used during school hours. After school is not allowed either as those teachers request that the vehicles are returned before school is over. Public transportation has been the go to, but it is not very convenient as this is still a rural area.
- So far, the primary way I have been able to provide community based instruction is by either tagging along on field trips or meeting the student and/or families outside of school hours. I was assured when I interviewed for this job that I would have the means to transport students to relevant lesson locations. Almost every school in the district is located within a residential neighborhood with very limited bus service. I am generally not able to have lessons that last longer than a class period, which isn't enough time to walk to most commercial areas, bus routes, or rail transit (even though all are present in the cities in which my district operates). Further, we have either an official or unofficial policy that prohibits teachers from being alone with students (which means either arranging for another teacher, a paraprofessional or another student)
- We are discouraged from having students in our car, so that just about ends my career. It would be nice to have a city car to use with insurance coverage, but that's just a fantasy.
- Off-campus instruction is discouraged. Forms are redundant and complicated. Use of a personal vehicle is unsupported. No district vehicle is provided.
- As there is no way to transport students to off campus sites during a 55 min. period, almost all lessons are done right here on campus or within 10-15 minutes walking distance.
- I am allowed to use the after school van if there is not a schedule conflict. The O and M prior to me had a "Special Education" car.
- Public bus transportation route times make some lessons difficult - only run 1 time an hour.
- Administrator does not want students transported in private vehicle to areas in other parts of Santa Rosa or nearby towns. Limited access to bus travel training.
- bus travel, store travel and mall travel
- Cannot provide a variety of environments and intersections to help teach and reinforce skills or to conduct assessments in.
- Some of our students attend school in rural areas or locations where there is limited public transportation, no sidewalks, few intersections, etc., and are simply inappropriate to address assessed O&M needs and skills.
- N/A
- XXXXXXXXXX: No driving students No district-provided transportation for off-campus O&M. No sessions before or after school hours. Sessions restricted to 3-block radius of campus. No sessions in home are if students live outside 3-block radius. Lessons on public transportation are impossible because of 3-block radius. No home visits. As a result, I cannot do thorough assessments, and I have been instructed to restrict how I

write goals to accommodate. :XXXXXXXXXXXX: No campus O&M for pre-schoolers. No lessons before or after school hours until secondary school, and only on a case-by-case basis.

- outside of county frowned upon. Extended long lessons for advanced travellers frowned upon
- Driving not allowed except for case-by-case situations; not allowed to work after union contract hours except for case-by-case situations
- Unable to transport students in our personal vehicle, to various locations for instruction. We have not been provided transportation options since our rights to transport students, for instruction, were taken away.
- somewhat because of using personal cars but also in being alone with students in a vehicle, which seems to be the bigger issue.

QUESTION 5: HOW ARE YOUR STUDENTS TRANSPORTED FOR O&M INSTRUCTION IN THE COMMUNITY? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

Responses:

Driven by O&M specialist in personal vehicle	59.38%	38
Driven by O&M specialist in school/district vehicle	14.06%	9
Driven by other (e.g. parent, school/district personnel)	14.06%	9
Use of public transportation	48.44%	31
Transportation is not allowed or provided for O&M instruction	17.19%	11
Other - please describe below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, I have not pursued it much • Walking • Walking • If the student is with the XXXXXX, they provide transportation for the student for O&M instruction • We walk or a parent drives them to meet me. The district offered to provide school busses for individual lessons, but they are available during a limited window (e.g., busses are not available during regular morning and afternoon routes, or evenings for night lessons [which they don't know I'm providing, but that's another story]) and 	15.63%	10

<p>unreliable (e.g., didn't show up, difficult to schedule). Public transit is impractical to target specific lessons, e.g., a particular type of street crossing, due to the amount of time it takes and limited routes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of students at this time have multiple handicaps and are medically involved. They are not going off campus. One student was taken off campus two years ago and the school was supportive. The community does not have a bus system or a taxi service. This does limit teaching. • No funding is given to O&M instructor to pay for public transportation. Plus with a one period time limit, public transportation usually does not work. • Private vendors like Uber • By foot • Alternative transportation services, i.e., Uber and Lyft. Also we walk to adjacent communities near campuses. 		
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QUESTION 6: DO YOU FEEL YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT HAS REASONABLE PROCEDURES FOR OBTAINING PERMISSION FOR O&M INSTRUCTION IN THE COMMUNITY?

Responses: 64 Total

Yes: 45 (70.31%)

No: 19 (29.69%)

QUESTION 7: IF YOU ANSWERED "NO" TO QUESTION 6, PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR CONCERNS BELOW.

Responses: 23 total (Information identifying specific schools, districts, counties, SELPAs or individuals has been removed).

- XXXXXX does not permit for instruction in the student's home area (for a preschool student). XXXXXX does not allow transportation in my private vehicle.
- It is a generic field trip form, which I am sure if something happened, they would say it was not covered by field trip approval...that is all we have available
- **We as O&M instructors have had to make up our own permission forms allowing us to take students off campus and in our own vehicles, but we are unsure of the legality of

these forms. We would love for there to be a basic O&M liability form library that we could access.

- It's a vague procedure...the way it's been done for decades. We just have parents sign a field trip form good for the whole year.
- I just feel like they are clueless about it - there isn't a procedure. I have a permission form that I inherited when I started the position, which I have parents sign to cover off-campus liability.
- I somewhat answered this in number 4. I hear a lot of staff and administrators discussing what I do (talking about me) but nobody has ever called a meeting with me to discuss this topic. I defend my teaching and explain to my program specialist (kind of my boss) why I take kids off campus but she just tells me to keep doing the good job that I am doing. I am kind of working with an unspoken rule that it is okay but frowned upon. I have worked with some of my kids for 10 years so have great rapport with parents and students.
- Yes at the moment but we are fearful of what is coming...
- They have no procedure. I don't even know if I should be writing community-based goals, knowing I most likely wouldn't be able to provide such lessons needed to achieve those goals
- Same as question #4.
- I haven't had any problems but I know my co-worker in the other part of the county has had difficulties with certain districts allowing her to transport students in her personal car.
- In past, not required to notify administrator of location if mobility lessons off campus (unless leaving county)
- There us no procedure for obtaining permission to have O & M teaching using private cars.
- There are none. We are simply not allowed and told it's against the law to transport students in our vehicles.
- A team is currently working on protocol. Every off-camps lesson must be approved 10 days prior and there is no flexibility for schedule changes, absences, etc.
- N/A
- Our district took us back from XXXXXX a few years ago. There were no set procedures so there is just the IEP and permission to put student in our car (field trip form) signed by parent every year. Not very formal or through. Just waiting for someone in the district to say we can't transport students anymore.
- XXXXXXXXXXXX requires the Field Trip Request form to specify dates and times for every lesson, with a separate form for each month of lessons, I must provide a lesson plan and a specific route map for each lesson.
- This is off the record: (Comment redacted)
- My greatest concern is that I am unable to provide a variety of settings for my students to transfer the use of o&m skills, across both familiar and unfamiliar areas. The environments surrounding the schools do not always allow for more advanced skills to be taught due to travel, walking, time it would take to get there (light controlled intersections, bus travel, business travel, etc). The surrounding environments become familiar due to our length of lesson and how far we can get, by foot, in that time.

- Last time I asked they wanted me to take another person with me. They even went as far as to hire an aide who spent a lot of time doing nothing due to changes in my schedule, or she interfered with lessons by giving students environmental information.
- Unsure. The district has no procedures other than what is stated within an IEP. Also, my district is prepared for transportation of students in the field day setting, not continual every day. Instead of writing down school sites, I write down as per students' IEP

QUESTION 8: ARE THERE OTHER LIMITATIONS IN O&M SERVICE PROVISION THAT YOU WOULD LIKE THIS COMMITTEE TO BE AWARE OF?

Responses: 37 Answered (Information identifying specific schools, districts, counties, SELPAs or individuals has been removed).

- rural areas have an even harder time providing community lessons. resources are limited and there can be several miles between school and "downtown."
- I'm not sure if I'm allowed to work with students outside of school hours, but I have one (high school) student that I meet with for "field trips," and no one has questioned our lessons at night (he has RP), but again, it would be nice to be completely "doing it right," rather than wondering if I am and pulling a "don't ask, don't tell."
- No.
- In the past I had to aggressively advocate for my low vision students to receive services, as the administrators claimed that the student needed to be legally blind in order to receive services. After much negotiation and providing multiple sources of information (eg. CA guidelines) they eventually backed down
- School district does not allow O&M lessons after school hours.
- No restrictions at this time.
- No
- We have heard that other districts are restricting O&M services to school campuses and during school hours. We have to continually work with different district personnel to maintain access to our students after school and to be able to drive them places in our own vehicles. Each district has different policies which make this a very time consuming process, as we work with at least 8 different school districts that we serve. As I said above, having an O&M resource website with access to legal requirements, specific rules from the state education guidelines, and a form library would be very helpful for us as teachers to have access to.
- No
- NO. XXXXXXXX HAS BEEN VERY GOOD REGARDING WHAT WE CAN DO WITH O&M LESSONS.
- Obviously nobody every wants an O&M to be alone with a student and that is partially why I believe transporting students is frowned upon. It would be great to not feel so stressed trying to do your job!! This is not a provision questions but more about caseload caps for O&M's. My district does not have really care how many students that I have. Thank you for fighting for us! It is appreciated.

- No. We have been very lucky to have the support of administrators, and are able to provide community or home-based instruction within or after school hours.
- Not yet..
- I believe that XXXXXXXXXXXX is an exception to this issue of taking students off campus (which is a huge problem in the field). At this school, the O&M department is given a lot of freedom and resources to encourage learning and exploration for our students - all of which is often ignored and restricted in most districts.
- No, I'm very fortunate. Did not have problems in Pleasanton when worked there last year (with transportation; problems in other areas though)
- The only requirement placed on me is to have Business Level payouts for my personal car insurance.
- No
- The "ratio policy" as it's called in my district. I can't find official board or other policy on the matter and it seems to be sporadically enforced for me and other teachers, but many people say faculty cannot be alone with a student - there needs to be another faculty member or another student present. Supposedly. We also supposedly aren't allowed to see students outside school hours, but I do anyway because it is the only way to get students to a wider variety of intersections and possibly stores and public transportation. Obviously this makes me quite nervous, so I am selective about which students I provide after school lessons, which makes me feel terrible. My CYA strategy usually consists of requesting at least one of my performance evaluation observations to happen during an after-school lesson so at least my admin can't claim they are unaware. This also makes me feel horrible.
- I also have limitations for working with students after school and evening time. There is only one student that is an exception but that's because he is high profile which is not fair to other students.
- My concerns are taking students out of class so that they miss academic instruction. O&M can take place during non academic activities - or at least I hope the school/parents would allow that.
- Not at this time
- No
- Not at this time
- Restrictions on field trips to other blindness agencies (Lighthouse)
- I want to say that the school districts have given no procedures regarding O&M in the community. I have only had 1 school district be unreasonable which was they didn't want the student to learn buses as it wasn't an academic goal. But now that school has had a change in administration the student is now learning buses
- No
- Not at this time. However, we have a smooth running program and a supportive administrator. She would be a great resource for other administrators to speak to to better understand supervising a VI program and its unique needs.
- No

- No
- O&M instruction must be provided within the instructional day. We are not allowed to work with students on minimum days. We are not allowed to provide night lessons for students who have challenges with night travel.
- For the purpose of this committee, no
- I have been reprimanded by my supervisor for advocating to loosen the restrictions for off-campus lessons.
- No
- I think you already know the issues.
- Lack of personnel.