Appendix C: Job Descriptions for Specialized Professionals

The following job descriptions are for professionals who are specially trained to work with students with visual impairments. These professionals may provide specialized assessments; direct teaching; consultation to school staff, students, and families; materials with or without adaptations. They serve as liaisons between school and community organizations and resources. These services are necessary to assist students to access the general education curriculum, participate in all areas of school life, and to prepare for the future.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts licenses Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments and Teachers of Students with Severe Special Needs. Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (CVRT) and Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) are certified on a national level by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP). These professionals may be independent contractors, work for private agencies that contract with the schools, or be employed directly by a public or private school or education collaborative.

Massachusetts Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments
Roles and Responsibilities

(The following is an adaptation of a paper created and endorsed by the Association of Massachusetts Educators of Students with Visual Impairments (AMESVI) in June 2005.)
http://amesvi.org

Introduction:

Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) are educators who have been specially trained to work with students with low vision or blindness and hold teaching licenses issued in their special field by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. They provide services to students from birth through age 21 with uncorrectable vision

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pathologies and/or to students who function as blind, including students with multiple
disabilities.

TVs’ roles are multifaceted, and cross many disciplines. They know how to read, write, and
teach Braille, and are knowledgeable about medical conditions and diseases of the eye. TVIs
typically are familiar with various types of magnification devices and assistive technology. They
are also familiar with state and federal laws regarding the education of their students, and are
knowledgeable about local agencies and resources. In addition to direct teaching, TVIs conduct
assessments and consult with other teachers and service providers regarding ways to make
school programs and materials accessible to students with visual impairments. The following
information from AMESVI lists and describes their comprehensive roles and responsibilities in
delivering high quality services to students in Massachusetts schools.

**Direct teaching:**
- Specialized communication modes, including Braille reading and writing
- Emergent Braille literacy skills
- Sensory stimulation
- The use of low vision aids, such as magnifiers and CCTVs
- Tactual skills
- Keyboarding
- Use of slate, stylus, and abacus.
- Use of computers and other assistive technology devices
- Visual efficiency skills
- Listening skills
- Academic areas requiring adaptation and reinforcement as a direct result of visual
  impairment – in particular preschool concepts/skills and beginning
  reading/writing/math
- Pre-teaching new skills to provide access to the curriculum
- Previewing the content of lessons to be taught in class
- Organization and study skills
- Daily living/independent living skills
- Leisure and recreation skills
- Social skills
- Self-advocacy
- Signature writing
- Career education

**Consultation with school staff:**
- Help teachers become familiar with the unique educational needs and learning
  characteristics of students with visual impairment.
- Provide information to classroom teachers, Certified Orientation and Mobility
  Specialists (COMS), and related service providers (occupational therapists,
  physical therapists, speech therapists, etc.) regarding strategies for working with
  students with visual impairments.
- Suggest ways to adapt materials and present lessons that are most meaningful to
  the students.

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• Interpret medical eye reports and functional vision assessments to help school personnel, including teachers of special subjects (gym, music, art, etc.), understand the student’s eye condition and its implications for learning.

• Make recommendations regarding the physical environment: lighting conditions, seating, positioning of materials, glare reduction, safe/efficient movement around the classroom, equipment use and storage, etc.

• Train paraprofessional to work effectively with students, to utilize adapted materials and specialized equipment appropriately.

• When the student is a Braille reader or pre-Braille reader, help school staff to acquire basic Braille reading/writing skills and to use computerized Braille translation systems.

• Observe classes and meet regularly with classroom teachers, parents, and other specialists/therapists to evaluate and coordinate the student’s program and services.

• Provide information to staff, students, and parents regarding the Vision Resources Library (VRL) and state laws, policies and procedures for borrowing books and educational materials from this resource. Provide information regarding additional sources of materials for students with visual impairments.

• Provide in-service training to school staff and to classmates.

• Plan with/confer with staff and other providers in all areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum: orientation and mobility, social interaction skills, independent living skills, recreation and leisure skills, career education, use of assistive technology, and visual efficiency skills (in addition to the compensatory skills and communication modes listed under “direct teaching”). Note: Consultation in these areas may sometimes involve personnel outside of the school.

• In all cases, serve as an active member of the student’s educational Team, helping to develop the IEP, and monitor the students’ progress.

Consultation with parents:

• Provide information about visual impairment and blindness, including links to regional, state, and national resources and parent organizations.

• Help parents understand their child’s eye condition and its educational implications.

• Help parents understand the unique educational needs of learners with visual impairments.

• Help parents acquire skills in Braille.

• Help parents adapt equipment, arrange safe spaces, and promote their child’s independence at home.

• Communicate regularly via conferences, phone, and/or e-mail regarding progress, concerns, resources, information-sharing, and future goals.

Consultation with students:

• Help students understand their visual condition and its implications for education, social and recreational experiences, and career planning.
• Help with transitions from one level of education to the next: from an early intervention program to preschool; from elementary to middle school, and then to high school; from high school to college, vocational program, or work.
• Promote independence by providing information about agencies and resources and by teaching the student how to access them.

Preparing/acquiring/adapting materials:
• Order Braille, large print, devices and aids, and other specialized educational materials from the Vision Resources Library and other sources.
• Arrange for storage of these materials for students’ use at each school.
• Package and return loaned VRL materials; complete forms for returned materials.
• Order and return recorded books.
• Obtain materials needing adaptation from the student’s teacher in advance of daily lessons.
• Prepare instructional Braille lessons.
• Transcribe print to Braille and Braille to print.
• Create books, worksheets, maps, charts, and graphs with adaptations for tactile learning.
• Tape-record certain lessons, tests, or instructions.
• Teach the paraprofessional methods of implementing adapted instructional materials for tactile learners or for students with low vision.
• Coordinate services from outside readers or Braille transcribers.

Assessment:
• Conduct and interpret Functional Vision Assessments (FVA).
• Conduct and interpret Learning Media Assessments (LMA).
• Provide assistance with assessments done by other school personnel; suggest any necessary accommodations or modifications to test protocols or testing environments.
• Assist with the administration of MCAS and other statewide or district-wide assessments, as needed.
• Assist with conducting alternative MCAS and other assessments as appropriate.
• Conduct ongoing assessment of skills and maintain a continuous record of student progress in the general curriculum and the Expanded Core Curriculum.
• Obtain and interpret medical eye reports and any functional assessments done by outside eye specialists or agencies.
• Recommend specialized evaluations, as necessary, such as technology, low vision, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and/or evaluations by a rehabilitation therapist or an orientation and mobility specialist.

Administrative and record-keeping tasks:
• Register students with the Massachusetts Accessible Instructional Materials Library and maintain up-to-date registration information.
• Complete the annual federal quota report to the Massachusetts Accessible Instructional Materials Library for access to the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) materials.

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• Write evaluation and progress reports.
• Maintain a file of information related to a student’s vision, including medical reports from ophthalmologists, optometrists, and low vision clinics; provide copies of these documents to the special education office.
• Register students for services from the National Library Service (Talking Books) and Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic.
• Identify sources for obtaining Braille books, adaptive technology, and other specialized equipment; communicate with sources and complete order forms.
• Arrange for/receive training in the use of new technology products to be used in the school.
• Maintain contact with counselors and rehabilitation workers from the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and other agencies as appropriate.
• Maintain contact with medical eye care professionals.
• Interact with agencies that provide summer and weekend recreational programs geared to students with visual impairments.
• Interact with agencies that provide specialized evaluation and/or training programs in such areas as technology, independent living skills, social skills, and transition to school and work.

Serving as a liaison between the school and community organizations and resources:
• Interact with local clubs and organizations that provide social or recreational opportunities.
• Identify community service organizations that can help with the purchase of specialized equipment.
• Provide ongoing support for developing positive attitudes within the community for inclusion of students with visual impairments. This often includes making presentations or speaking with community groups.
Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists
Roles and Responsibilities

Introduction:

Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) are professionals who have been trained to work with students with vision loss. They are not therapists, but rather hold certification in Orientation and Mobility (O&M) in addition to either a bachelors and/or masters degree. They are specialists trained to provide services to students from birth through adulthood with uncorrectable vision pathologies and/or to those who function as blind or visually impaired, including students with multiple disabilities. Orientation and mobility skills are the ability to travel safely through the environment and develop an understanding of how an environment is configured and to correctly interpret this information with or without vision. O&M training usually focuses on navigating familiar environments first, such as the classroom or home setting. Depending upon an individual’s needs and abilities, this training may extend beyond the school campus to the community, including public agencies such as libraries, public transportation systems, and independent living environments.

The COMS’s role is multifaceted and crosses many disciplines. O&M Specialists are knowledgeable about medical conditions and diseases of the eye, and how these may impact functional travel skills and functional travel vision. A COMS is familiar with various types of magnification devices for long distance use as well as assistive travel devices and technology. Certified O&M Specialists are also familiar with state and federal laws regarding the education of their students and are knowledgeable about local agencies and resources for this population.

In addition to direct teaching, a COMS conducts assessments and consults with other teachers and service providers regarding ways to make school and community programs accessible and welcoming to students with visual impairments. The comprehensive roles and responsibilities of a COMS in delivering high quality services to students with visual impairments in Massachusetts schools include:

Direct teaching:

- Use of low vision devices.
- Motor skills needed for balance, posture and gait
- Use of adaptive devices and techniques to assist those with multiple disabilities
- Orientation skills
- Tactile skills
- Use of computers and other assistive technology devices that support traveling or route planning skills
- Visual efficiency skills
- Listening skills
- Protective techniques
- Sighted guide techniques
- Pre-cane skills
- Long cane training
- Use of adaptive mobility devices

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• Daily living and independent living skills
• Leisure and recreation skills
• Map skills and route planning including techniques for traveling in indoor and outdoor environments
• Pedestrian travel skills
• Analysis and identification of intersections and traffic patterns
• Use of traffic control devices
• Techniques for crossing streets
• Use of public transportation, taxis, and/or specialized transit services
• Social skills
• Self-advocacy
• Communication (e.g., using the telephone, soliciting assistance)
• Personal safety awareness skills when traveling

Consultation with school staff:
• Help teachers become familiar with the unique educational needs and learning characteristics of students with visual impairments.
• Provide information to all school personnel including classroom teachers, physical education teachers, bus drivers/monitors, cafeteria staff, playground staff, maintenance staff, Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments, paraprofessionals, and related service providers regarding travel strategies for students with visual impairments.
• Provide in-service training to school staff regarding:
  • Sighted guide assistance,
  • How the student travels (e.g., use of long cane, use of vision),
  • Emergency evacuation such as fire drills,
  • The physical arrangement of the classroom/school environment,
  • Effective communication (e.g., direction giving, offering assistance).
• Interpret medical eye reports and functional vision assessments to help school personnel, including teachers of special subjects (physical education, dance, drama, etc.) understand the student’s eye condition and its implications for safe travel and movement.
• Make recommendations for the physical environment (classrooms, hallways, gym, cafeteria, playground areas) regarding lighting conditions, seating, glare reduction, safe/efficient movement around the environment, and equipment use and storage.
• Train staff when to reinforce and/or to assist the level of support a student needs.
• Observe classes and meet regularly with classroom teachers, parents, and other specialists/therapists to evaluate and coordinate the student’s program and services.
• Plan/confer with staff and other providers in all areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum: orientation and mobility, social interaction skills, independent living skills, recreation and leisure skills, career education, use of assistive technology, and visual efficiency skills (in addition to the compensatory skills and communication modes listed under "direct teaching"). In all cases, serve as an active member of the student’s educational Team, helping to develop the IEP and monitor student progress.

Note: Consultation in these areas may sometimes involve personnel outside of the school.

Guidelines: For the Specialized Assessment of Students with Visual Impairments
Consultation with parents:
- Provide information about visual impairment and blindness, and links to parent organizations, regional, state, and national resources.
- Help parents understand their child’s eye condition and its implications for travel.
- Help parents understand the unique orientation and mobility needs of pedestrians/travelers with visual impairments.
- Help parents to acquire skills in adapting equipment, arranging safe spaces, and promoting their child’s independence at home.
- Communicate regularly via conferences, phone, and/or e-mail regarding progress, concerns, resources, information-sharing, and future goals.

Consultation with students:
- Help the student understand his/her visual condition and its implications for travel, social and recreational experiences, and career planning.
- Help the student effectively communicate the implications of the vision loss to peers, teachers, and others.
- Assist with transitions from one level of education to the next: from an early intervention program to preschool; from elementary to middle school, and then to high school; from high school to college, work, or a vocational program.
- Promote independence by providing information about agencies and resources and by teaching the student how to access them.
- Work effectively with the student regarding safe travel skills and how the student may use specialized equipment.

Consultation with classmates:
- Communicate with the student’s classmates concerning the following:
  - Sighted guide assistance,
  - The student’s methods of travel (e.g., use of long cane, use of vision),
  - Classroom/school environment set-up,
  - When and how to offer assistance to the student with visual impairment.

Preparing/acquiring/adapting materials:
- May assist in the development of tactile and/or large print maps of the classroom, the school, the neighborhood, and the community.

Assessment
- Conduct and interpret Functional Vision Assessments (FVA) relating to orientation and mobility skills.
- Conduct ongoing assessment of skills and maintain a continuous record of student progress in pertinent areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC).
- Obtain and interpret medical eye reports and any functional assessments done by outside eye specialists or agencies.
- Recommend specialized evaluations, as necessary, such as technology, low vision, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and/or evaluations by a rehabilitation therapist or a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments.

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Note: O&M evaluations will take place in classrooms, on and around campus, within the student’s home and/or in community environments.

**Administrative and record-keeping tasks:**
- Write assessment and progress reports.
- Maintain a file of information related to a student’s vision, including medical reports from ophthalmologists, optometrists, and low vision clinics; provide copies of these documents to the special education office.
- Maintain contact with counselors and rehabilitation workers from the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and other agencies as appropriate.
- Maintain contact with medical eye care professionals.
- Interact with agencies that provide summer and weekend recreational programs geared to students with visual impairments.
- Consult with the Team in working with agencies that provide specialized evaluation and/or training in such areas as technology, independent living skills, social skills, and transition.

**Serve as a liaison between the school and community organizations and resources:**
- Interact with local clubs and organizations that provide social or recreational opportunities.
- Identify community service organizations that can help with the purchase of specialized equipment.
- Provide ongoing support for developing positive attitudes within the community for inclusion of students with visual impairments. This often includes making presentations or speaking with community groups.
Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapists
Roles and Responsibilities

Introduction

Certified vision rehabilitation therapists (CVRT,) previously certified as rehabilitation teachers, are professionals who have been trained to work with individuals of all ages who are blind or have low vision. They hold certification from the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP), in addition to a bachelor’s and/or master’s degree. Their job titles may vary from agency to agency (e.g., rehabilitation teacher or rehabilitation specialist).

CVRTs instruct individuals with visual impairments in the use of compensatory skills and devices that will enable them to live safe, productive, and independent lives. Vision rehabilitation therapists work in areas that enhance vocational opportunities, independent living, and the educational development of persons with vision loss, and may include work in schools, homes, and center-based or itinerant settings.

CVRTs support the work of the other professionals teaching the student, often by integrating new skills within the home and community environment. CVRTs most often provide the primary instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) that is needed for every student with visual impairments in the following areas:

- Independent living skills,
- Recreation and leisure skills,
- Social interaction skills.

The provision of these services usually extends beyond the school environment, school day, and academic school year in order to meet the student’s goals.

Specific CVRT responsibilities include assessment of the person’s needs in his/her home, school, work, and community environments; development and implementation of instructional programs; case management and record keeping; identification and utilization of local and national resources; and facilitation of the person’s psychosocial adjustment to vision loss. The comprehensive roles and responsibilities of a CVRT in delivering high quality services to students in Massachusetts schools include:

Direct teaching of:

Independent living skills / personal management:

- Personal hygiene skills and techniques
- Grooming techniques
- Dressing skills
- Selection and care of clothing (e.g., laundry, labeling, sewing, ironing)
- Eating techniques (e.g., cutting, pouring, serving)
- Medical management
- Organization and labeling techniques
- Identification of resources for personal management
- Time management skills

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Communication skills, including:
- Use of low vision aids to enhance functional vision,
- Record keeping and note-taking systems,
- Braille,
- Handwriting techniques,
- Typing and use of technology and adaptive equipment

Note: In the area of communication skills therapists, are reinforcing skills learned in school or at special programs, for use at home, at after-school or summer job placements, and in the community.

Home management:
- Meal planning
- Food shopping
- Meal preparation
- Efficient and safe use of kitchen appliances and equipment (e.g., stove/oven, microwave, toaster, etc.)
- Housekeeping techniques (e.g., systematic patterns, dusting, mopping)
- Efficient and safe use of household products and equipment
- Money identification, management and budgeting techniques
- Adaptive home mechanics techniques
- Organization and labeling techniques for the home (e.g., food products, appliance dials, cleaning products)
- Identification of home management resources

Recreation and leisure skills:
- Crafts, hobbies, and adapted games
- Cultural and educational pursuits
- Sports and physical activities
- Participation in group or team activities
- Participation in community recreation opportunities
- Use of the telephone, cell phone, messaging, and phone cards
- Organization and labeling techniques
- Identification of resources and referrals for additional recreation and leisure pursuits

Social interaction skills:
- Self-advocacy skills
- Personal safety awareness and techniques
- Use of appropriate facial expressions and other nonverbal communication techniques
- Friendship/interpersonal skills
- Conversation techniques
- Manners
- Identification of resources and referrals for social skill intervention

*Guidelines: For the Specialized Assessment of Students with Visual Impairments*
Consultation with school staff:

- Help teachers become familiar with the unique independent living, recreational and social needs of students with visual impairment.
- Provide in-service training to school staff and to classmates in the following areas:
  - Daily living skills and techniques
  - Home management skills and techniques
  - Recreation and leisure skills and techniques
  - Social interactions
  - Organization and labeling techniques
- Interpret medical eye reports and functional vision assessments to help school personnel understand the student’s eye condition and its implications for organization of work and play environments.
- Make recommendations regarding the organization of space and materials for successful integration of a student in the work and play areas of the school (e.g., kitchen set-up for a home economic class).
- Train the paraprofessional to work effectively with the student in regard to daily living, recreation and social skills, and the student’s use of specialized equipment.
- Observe the student in specific environments, as requested, and meet regularly with the parents and other specialists/therapists to evaluate and coordinate the student’s program and services.
- Plan with/confer with staff and other providers in all areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum.
- In all cases, serve as an active member of both the student’s educational Team, helping to develop the IEP, and the vocational rehabilitation Team, helping to develop the Individual Written Rehabilitation Plan (IWRP).

Note: Consultation in these areas may sometimes involve personnel outside of the school.

Consultation with parents:

- Provide information about visual impairment and blindness, providing links to regional, state, and national resources and parent organizations.
- Help parents understand their child’s eye condition and its implications for independent living, recreation, and social situations.
- Help parents acquire skills in adapting equipment, arranging safe spaces, and promoting their child’s independence at home.
- Write scheduled progress reports.
- Communicate regularly via conferences, phone, and/or e-mail regarding progress, concerns, resources, information sharing, and future goals.
- Accompany a student and his or her parents to appointments with other professionals working with the student as appropriate.

Consultation with students:

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• Help the student understand his/her visual condition and its implications for independent living, social, and recreational experiences, at any time during the school years and as the student transitions out of the education system.
• Help the student gain independence in non-academic areas.
• Encourage the use of low vision devices and adaptive equipment for non-academic uses as appropriate.
• Help the student use his/her other senses to learn about surroundings.
• Reinforce skills being learned in academic settings and during orientation and mobility service.
• Assist with access to recreational, shopping, and entertainment activities within the community.
• Promote independence by providing information about agencies and resources and by teaching the student how to access them.

Prepare/acquire/adapt materials:
• Assist in accessing adaptive equipment, labels, etc. for items used for daily living skills, home management, travel and/or recreation.

Assessment:
• Conduct ongoing assessment of skills and maintain a continuous record of student progress in pertinent areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum included in the IEP.
• Interpret medical reports, eye reports and any functional assessments done by outside specialists or agencies regarding their impact on pertinent ECC areas.
• Recommend specialized evaluations, as necessary that may reinforce skill acquisition in areas of the ECC. (e.g., technology, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech, orientation and mobility, low vision, and/or an evaluation by a TVI).

Note: Evaluation and training by a CVRT may take place in classrooms, but more often will occur within the home and/or community environments.

Administrative and record-keeping tasks:
• Write assessment and progress reports.
• Maintain a file of information related to the student’s vision, IEP, IWRP, etc.
• Maintain contact with the parents, teachers, and other professionals involved with the student in the education and rehabilitation systems, including state agencies.
• Interact with agencies that provide after-school, weekend, and summer recreational programs geared to students with visual impairments.
• Consult with the Team in working with agencies that provide specialized evaluation and/or training programs.
Serve as a liaison between the school and community organizations and resources:

- Interact with local clubs and organizations that provide social or recreational opportunities.
- Identify community service organizations that can help with the purchase of specialized equipment for independent living or recreation.
- Provide ongoing support for developing positive attitudes and accessible environments within the community for inclusion of students with visual impairments. This often includes making presentations or speaking with community groups.