



Transitions:
Moving On, Moving Out
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Hosted by



Perceived Needs of Orientation & Mobility Specialists who Work with Individuals who are Deaf-Blind

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Why is this important?

“These students get missed and fall through the cracks, and particularly in the rural areas, we don’t have enough people. We don’t have enough vision specialists. We don’t have enough hearing specialists. But, we certainly don’t have enough deafblind specialists to really make sure that we are getting all these students with the services that they need.”

~Anonymous

Purpose

- The purpose of this study is to identify the key areas of need for pre-service orientation and mobility (O&M) specialists to work with students who are deaf-blind
- With the aim to provide insight to modifications that could be beneficial towards improving current practices of graduate level orientation and mobility preparation programs.

Primary Research Question:

What are supports and training needs of orientation and mobility specialists who work with students who are deafblind?

Emergent Themes

- **University Preparation**
 - Course on Multiple Disabilities
 - Observations
 - Internship Placement
- **Personal Experience**
 - Learn from others
 - Resources outside of university
 - Trial and error
- **Perceived Needs for working in deafblindness**
 - Knowledge on how learning is impacted
 - Hands-on experience with students and equipment
 - Dual sensory simulations

Participant Quotes

“All the articles and such, they’re all important and it’s great to get that information in class, but I think I would go ahead and probably add an extra week to the techniques class to be able to experience those situations...”

Participant Quotes

“I don’t expect that they’re going to give us a formula in our university programs, but we need enough experience and exposure to feel comfortable with our own professional judgment.”

Participant Quotes

“A lot of it* is mostly trial and error, I would say 95% trial and error.”

*working with students who are deaf-blind

Findings

- The analysis of the 8 transcripts revealed the commonality of the participants in that they all expressed a greater need for training in the area of working with students who are deafblind.
- Participants stated that the majority of their skills and strategies were a result of using trial and error, resources from outside of their university, and/or learning from others in the field. All participants mentioned that their course on multiple disabilities created awareness, but not in-depth training on how to work with the individual populations, including deafblindness.

Discussion & Implications

This creates implications for current orientation and mobility training programs, in that they could potentially improve their graduates' competencies by providing:

- Hands on experience working with students who are deafblind
- Use of case studies, instruction on using assistive technology, etc
- Authentic simulations for the spectrum of vision/hearing loss
- Create a better understanding of how learning can be impacted by deafblindness.



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