**Oregon Commission for the Blind Orientation and Career Center**



 **Welcome Packet**

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# OREGON COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND: ORIENTATION AND CAREER CENTER WELCOME LETTER

Welcome to the Oregon Commission for the Blind's Orientation and Career Center for the Blind (OCCB). The OCCB staff is here to provide you with the fundamental tools, training and resources you need to begin working toward your vocational rehabilitation goals. We are pleased that you have decided to participate in this program and hope that you will find it helpful, educational, and informative. We expect and look forward to your full participation in this program.

This packet includes information about the OCCB program, the preparation work that is required prior to becoming a student at OCCB and other information students need to know before beginning training at OCCB. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors have a supplementary packet which they will go through with each client in advance of their admission to the OCCB program. That packet contains important checklists as well as documentation/wavers that must be read and signed before students can participate in many of the classes offered at the OCCB.

If you have questions or would like more information about the Orientation and Career Center, please feel free to contact the OCCB Director, Jonathan Scrimenti, at Jonathan.Scrimenti@ocb.oregon.gov or 971-673-1588.

# CRITERIA FOR ENTRANCE INTO THE OCCB PROGRAM

Training at OCCB is part of an individual, comprehensive vocational rehabilitation plan developed between an individual and their vocational counselor. The OCCB receives referrals directly from vocational counselors, who indicate to the OCCB the specific training areas in which the student agrees to be involved. Any changes in instruction areas after training begins must be approved by the referring counselor, the student and the Director of OCCB. OCCB instructors, along with their students, will provide the referring counselor with written progress reports.

The following are the minimal expectations that students must meet in order to be referred to the OCCB:

1. The ability to travel to and from the OCCB, if commuting
2. The ability and stamina to walk at least six blocks
3. Be able to select and eat a diet appropriate to their medical condition(s)
4. The ability to maintain personal care
5. Medically stable and capable of managing own medical care;
6. Able to dispose of medical waste correctly

Residential Students have added requirements

1. Have and use a cane
2. Possess at least basic cooking skills (residential students only)
3. O&M and technology skills to grocery shop either online or in store

Before entering the OCCB, all students with diabetes must verify that they can independently manage their diabetes which includes measuring blood sugar, measuring and taking insulin, and disposing of sharps and blood-contaminated materials correctly. If there are concerns about a student’s ability to participate in OCCB activities, the OCCB may require a written physician’s release prior to the student participating in physical activities that are included in skills training.

Prior to beginning classes at the OCCB, each student will complete an assessment to determine current knowledge/skill levels. This will be the basis for the courses that student is enrolled in at the Center.

# GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE OCCB

It is expected that those who complete the program at the OCCB will be able to achieve social and economic independence. Center staff teach adaptive techniques so that students acquire the skills that will enable them to actively participate in their communities, their places of work, and in society as a whole.

The OCCB teaches students the basic adaptive skills that can be applied in many circumstances throughout the rest of the student’s career and lifetime. After completing training at the OCCB, the counselor and student may agree that further vocational skills training is needed before entry to the job market. This further training can be acquired via a variety of community based vocational and/or educational sources.

The OCCB serves both residential and local (commuter) students. Residential students come from outside the Portland area and stay in apartments rented by the agency. Commuting students generally live in or around the Portland area.

In order to be enrolled in a vocational rehabilitation program with OCB, a person must be legally blind. Oregon statutes define “person who is blind” as a person whose central visual acuity does not exceed 20/200 in the better eye with best correction or whose visual acuity, if better than 20/200, is accompanied by a limit to the field of vision to such a degree that its widest diameter subtends an angle of no greater than 20 degrees. The statutes define “person with a visual impairment” as a person who is blind or has seriously impaired vision or who has a condition that will lead to legal blindness.

The OCCB is located at the Oregon Commission for the Blind main office at 535 SE 12th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97214. The telephone number is 971-673-1588. Most students who live in the Portland metropolitan area commute to the OCCB. Some students attend classes on a full-time basis; others have a part-time instruction schedule based on individual needs.

OCCB terms are offered four times each year. Each term is approximately 12 weeks in duration. Most courses can be completed within this time frame. The student, vocational counselor, and the OCCB Director determine how any courses not completed within the term will be completed in future terms. Completion may occur in another term at the Center, via distance learning (internet and/or telephone instruction with Center instructors or contractors), or by field teachers located throughout the state.

OCCB instruction hours are generally 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Upon arrival at the Center, each student will be provided with an individualized course schedule for that term. Many classes are conducted via one-on-one instruction. Schedules may be revised based on periodic student assessments throughout the term. There will be times when a class, or classes, will be rescheduled or canceled due to instructor illness or vacation, inclement weather, State or Federal holidays, or issues that affect the Agency as a whole.

Homework will be assigned. Students are expected to complete assignments and practice new skills outside of class. Regular attendance and timeliness are crucial aspects of learning and of both retaining and maintaining employment. Therefore it is important that all Center students arrive to classes on time, stay for the duration of classes and maintain a regular record of attendance.

To assist with the student’s progress, OCCB students will meet with their support team at mid-term and at the end of the term. These meetings are called staffings and include the student, the Center Director, OCCB instructors who have worked with the student, and the student’s Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Topics include a student’s progress/strengths, challenges/ barriers moving forward in given areas, attendance, status in the program (projected completion), and other relevant topics that may arise during instruction at OCCB.

Some after-hour, off-site, and weekend activities will be offered in order to expand the students experience, build new skills, and enhance confidence.

For rehabilitation instruction to be thorough and complete, a portion of the training is non-visual. Beginning in the second week of training, each student has non-visual training using senses including smell, time, distance, touch and texture, slope, incline, hearing (distance, echo and wind), shadows and the sun, and individual muscle memory.

# COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

The following section gives a brief descriptive overview of each area of instruction offered at the OCCB. Participation in specific courses is determined after potential students undergo an assessment. Based on the results of the assessments, counselors refer clients to the courses at OCCB that are identified as areas needing development within the client’s vocational plan. The OCCB Director oversees this process and, in some circumstances, may identify client needs that are not most effectively met by the Center. In these cases, the Director and Counselor work together to ensure Students’ needs are met via contractors, community resources, and/or a combination of external and OCCB resources. Upon entrance to the OCCB program, all students are expected to actively and consistently participate in the agreed upon courses in their individual schedule.

## Orientation and Mobility, also known as Cane Travel

Cane travel is the development of orientation and mobility skills, including the use of proper cane techniques and the development of other senses. Students will be offered the opportunity to develop the necessary skills and confidence to travel safely and independently through a variety of environments.

## Techniques of Daily Living (TDL)

TDL addresses a wide range of independent living skills. Students may receive instruction in all aspects of the following: housekeeping and organization, clothing care and identification, money identification and organization, personal hygiene and adaptive grooming techniques, adaptive mending and sewing techniques; paperwork management; and other areas of daily living as identified by the counselor, student and/or instructor.

## Meal Preparation

The meal preparation class topics may include: shopping for a variety of groceries using independent, low vision, and assisted techniques; preparing and using a shopping list; identifying and utilizing transportation that specifically works for grocery shopping; paper money identification; using a PIN pad at check-out; identifying groceries upon arriving at home; organizing a kitchen; communicating with and working with family members who also use the kitchen; adaptive kitchen skills (injury prevention techniques); food preparation; measuring and pouring hot, cold, wet and dry ingredients; recipe research and utilization; family dining techniques; and restaurant/public etiquette/techniques. Adaptive skills and instruction will be given to allow students to become as safe and effective as possible in all areas. At the end of the term each student has the opportunity to highlight their adaptive skills by participating in the preparation of the end of term lunch for other students and family members. Two classes provided which complement the Food Preparation class are an “eating with class” luncheon, where students and family members dine without vision, and a barbeque, where students learn how to use a gas grill and an electric grill. Both classes are taught by instructors who are either blind or under sleep shade.

## Woodshop

The Woodshop class helps build a student’s self-confidence as they design and construct a project using many of the tools found in a standard woodshop. Students will be taught to use safe operating techniques as they use hand and power tools. Students are encouraged to work as independently as they can throughout the construction of their project. Explore the woodshop, learn about hand tools, shop machinery, power tools, and general shop safety. Learn about the “click ruler” which allows a person to measure accurately without relying on vision. This class also serves to enhance fine motor and sequential processing/implementation skills.

## Low Vision

Students with residual remaining vision will be assessed. Based on the identified visual needs of each individual, recommendations for low vision devices may be made to the student and their vocational counselor. Training in appropriate use of and care for low vision devices will be provided as appropriate.

## Assistive Technology

OCCB offers training in the use of assistive software and/or hardware that are appropriate to the student's vision loss and any other physical limitation and consistent with their vocational goal. Students will be taught the skills of the recommended technology in preparation for further skill development. In many cases, more advanced training will be utilized through local community resources.

## Keyboarding

Students will be taught to type the entire computer keyboard by touch, including numbers and symbols, as well as how to use the appropriate formats when typing personal and business letters. When appropriate, a transcription system will be used to enhance basic skills. Students are encouraged to increase both keyboard accuracy and typing speed.

## Challenge Course

Once each term, students who are new to OCCB attend a one-day "Challenge Course," designed to enhance problem-solving, improve self-confidence, engage students in clear communication, and encourage team-building. This course is also designed to increase each student's ability to take on physical and personal challenges.

## Stamina

Many students come for classes having had little or no physical activity since their vision change or diagnosis. All students should have stamina, good balance, not fatigue easily, manage their blood sugars throughout a day with varied activities, and remain active all day for classes that likely will include travel training. Class consists of staff-supervised floor exercises and use of stationary equipment for an hour, twice a week, in a group setting. Students are strongly encouraged to participate to their ability, but the stamina class is not required. A water bottle and loose clothes are recommended for these classes.

## Adaptive Devices

Students will be exposed to and a variety of adaptive, portable devices, which may include digital voice recorder, talking/voice recognition alarm clock, note taking devices, book reading devices and iPhones/iPads/ Android/cell phones. Training will be provided for the use of those tools deemed to be the best fitted to the student’s vocational goals (as determined by the counselor, student, and instructor).

## Self-Defense

Sightless Self-Defense was developed by Sensei Stan Miller of Portland Small Circle Jujitsu. The course focuses on three areas. The first is to improve posture, balance, and movement. The second is to increase confidence and awareness of the environment one is traveling through. The third area is to give each student an individual set of skills to address varying levels of threat without the use of brute strength. The class is designed for all age groups and abilities with one-on-one instruction from Sensei Miller and volunteers (prior OCCB students who have previously completed this training).

## Living with Blindness

The goal of Living with Blindness is to provide students with a safe place to begin their adjustment to blindness. It is a critical class in which instructors provide a framework for students to discuss and address individual issues related to sight loss, which is essential for both the motivation to seek employment and the ability to gain/retain employment. The backbone of the group class includes issues that students bring to the table – whether it be depression, frustration, shame over using a white cane, feelings of being misunderstood, fear, and other experiences that relate to adjustment to vision loss. The class format includes present-based conversation, writing/recording exercises, homework, and self-reflection exercises.

## Braille

Braille is a critical aspect of maintaining and enhancing literacy. In this class students learn to read and write both un-contracted and/or contracted Braille.

## Career Preparation

The objective of this course is to help students establish and maintain the tools necessary for effective career preparation. This will be accomplished through exploration of various areas in the career process. This class focuses on job seeking skills such as: learning how to write a professional resume, cover letter, interview follow-up letters; how to prepare for an interview; identifying personal strengths, specialized skill sets, transferrable skills; completing on-line job applications; gaining knowledge and developing access to job seeking resources on the internet with the intended outcome of becoming self-sufficient in one’s job search/acquisition.

## Practical/Communication Skills

Students work individually with instructors, post-assessment, to enhance/develop those areas identified as needing improvement. Topics may include banking and recordkeeping, eating skills, dining comfortably in public, ordering from a menu, paying the check, signaling wait staff, entering and leaving a restaurant or store, requesting assistance in a professional fashion, declining assistance with courtesy, labeling and organizing clothing and personal items, meeting people for the first time, shaking hands, appropriate touch, using the telephone as a resource to get information, shopping, taking a taxi etc.

## Brown-Bag Lunch Sessions

Students are invited to bring their own lunch to an information/resource sharing session held on most Mondays from noon to 1:00 p.m. (an email communication will be sent the week prior to the brownbag). Invited speakers will share information about topics including national and local advocacy organizations for persons with vision loss, benefits planning, sleep issues related to blindness, career exploration, healthy living, etc. Although these are voluntary, all students are encouraged to participate in these sessions and share their own experiences and resources along the way.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## How long should I plan to be a student at the OCCB?

The exact length of your training will be determined by your needs and your capacity to learn. Instruction time can vary from one week to a full term (twelve weeks) to three terms (nine months).

## Is there an attendance requirement?

Yes. Once a student makes the commitment to come to OCCB, attendance is mandatory. Instructors must be notified in the event that it is necessary for students to miss a class session since much of the instruction is provided one-on-one. Notify staff by leaving a message at 971-673-1588. All personal business is expected to be handled after class hours. It is understood that students may need to take class days off for personal reasons (such as for family or medical emergencies). However, all students are responsible for notifying their OCCB teachers prior to any scheduled absences. Students are allowed no more than two sick days and two excused (preapproved by the Center Director) absences per term. If students exceed these allowed absences, they will be set up with a meeting with their counselor and the Center Director to determine next steps (including but not limited to dismissal from the training program).

## Can friends or family come for a visit?

Yes! Family members and other people in a student’s support network are strongly encouraged to visit and attend training classes. Before inviting a visitor, please inform the Center Director. The inviting student is responsible for their guests’ behavior. Periodic open houses, tours, and other events are held for family, friends, and others to observe, to meet staff, become informed about the facilities and resources. Prior approval from the Center Director for overnight guests in the apartments is required. It is expected that students check in with their roommate (when applicable) to be sure that hosting an over-night guest is agreeable to both parties. In general over-night guests should be infrequent and stay no more than two consecutive nights.

## Can students go home on weekends?

Yes. The student’s counselor can authorize payment for one round-trip per month for every residential Center student. If a student chooses to return home more frequently, the additional transportation arrangements and costs will be the student’s responsibility. Because independent living is such an integral aspect of our residential training, it is encouraged that students limit home visits in order to develop skills and relationships in the residential environment.

## What will it cost to attend the Center as a student?

There is no fee for the services provided by the OCCB, though there may be a cost for voluntary outside activities (e.g., movies, dinners, leisure or sports, entrance fees, etc.) and for optional adaptive equipment that may be recommended by teachers.

## Can I have a pet at the apartment and/or OCB?

Sorry, no pets are allowed at the OCCB or in the apartments. Dog guides are allowed and are not considered pets.

## Am I too old to participate?

No, as long as a student’s health is stable and allows him/her the ability to participate in classes and Center activities, the Center welcomes people of all ages. Students of all ages have successfully attended and completed courses at the OCCB. The OCCB Director may ask students to obtain medical clearance if there are apparent or known health issues that are of concern.

## Who determines what classes I will be taking?

The specific training areas assigned to students is determined by the student, the counselor, and the Center Director. This generally occurs after prospective students have visited the Center for an assessment. As students’ progress through classes at the center, classes and schedules may change to meet student needs/aptitudes.

## What about meals and other expenses while I am attending OCCB?

All commuting students are responsible for their own meals. Students housed in the center apartments may be provided with a monthly stipend by their VR Counselor. The stipend is intended to cover expenses such as food, supplies, and activities necessary for rehabilitation, while maintaining the costs of a home or an apartment elsewhere. All student apartments have reasonably equipped kitchens.

## Do I need this training if I am not totally blind?

Yes, once a client and vocational counselor have determined that he/she is eligible for the OCCB program, the student can rest assured, regardless of remaining vision, the OCCB instructors can offer skills to help students achieve their personal and professional goals. All classes will take into account the level of vision and/or the progressive nature of any eye condition that students may experience.

## What happens if I have an accident?

If you should have a non-urgent accident, report it immediately to the OCCB Director or instructor. In case of an immediate emergency while at OCCB and/or in the apartments, the best course of action is to call 911.

## What if I have a doctor’s appointment, need medical attention, or must renew a prescription?

Before you travel to Portland, discuss the 12-week stay with your physician, pharmacist, and medical insurance company. Have your physician refer you to a physician in Portland. Your pharmacy can arrange for you to get your medications from a pharmacy in the 97214 or 97215 ZIP codes.

# OCCB THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

The Center building is both a workplace and an educational institution; therefore we respectfully request that all students, staff and visitors observe the following practices.

* Dress at the center is business casual. Clothing must be clean, in good repair, and appropriate for an office/work setting.
* Excessive noise at the Center is prohibited.
* The use and/or possession of alcoholic beverages or drugs on Commission property are prohibited.
* Smoking is prohibited in the apartments and inside the agency. If desired, please ask to be shown where the designated smoking areas outside the building are, and where there is an outside trash can.
* Persons using a dog guide are expected to clean up after them. The Center has an outside trash can for just such instances.
* Participation in emergency drills is mandatory. Please immediately vacate the building whenever an emergency alarm sounds.
* At the Center each student will be assigned a locker or share a locker with another student. In the student lounge there is a microwave, sink and refrigerator. Building hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (doors are locked during non-business hours).
* The student lounge is provided as the place to hold conversations, study for classes, or have meals together. It is requested that all meetings, conversations, or other gatherings are conducted in locations away from the front desk—most often, the student lounge is the best location choice.
* Students and their guests are required to sign in and out of the building each time they enter/leave for everyone’s security and safety.
* Some staff, students, visitors are sensitive to perfumes and other scents. Please do not wear perfumes, after shaves, or other scents while attending classes or events at the agency.
* Please mute all cell phones and other devices and do not use them during center classes.

The Center building is both a workplace and an educational institution; therefore we respectfully request that all students, staff and visitors observe all of OCCB’s practices and policies.

# INFORMATION ABOUT THE TRIMET HONORED CITIZEN APPLICATION

Tri-Met Ticket Office

701 SW 6th Avenue

Portland OR 97204

503-962-2455

Email: accessible@Tri-Met.org

Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

To use an Honored Citizen fare, a person must present one of the following to Tri-Met personnel: Proof of age 65 or older; a Medicare card, or a Tri-Met Honored Citizen Identification Card (which will be issued after completing and returning the application).

If you need assistance, please call the Commission and ask for your counselor. They can help you fill this out. There are two locations on the application needing the applicant’s signature. Please note that you will need your Honored Citizens ID Card in order to participate in O&M Training.

# DRIVING DIRECTIONS TO OCB

The agency is located at the corner of SE 12th and Washington at 535 SE 12th Ave. The front entrance to the Agency is on the corner of SE 12th and Washington. Parking is on the street. The following are directions to get to OCB from different directions in the state.

Heading West on I-84: Take I-84 west, as you approach downtown and the freeway's end, stay in the left lane where you will merge onto I-5 south. Take the CITY CENTER/ OREGON CITY exit. Follow the sign to OREGON CITY, it is on the left and will place you on a single-track ramp curving you off to the left toward the East side of Portland. (If you cross the river you are going the wrong way). The ramp will place you on SE Belmont Street. Get into the center lane and follow Belmont St. to SE 12th Ave. Turn Left on SE 12th and follow it for 3 blocks to the Agency.

Heading North on I-5: Take I-5 north, stay on I-5 north and follow the signs to The Dalles and I-84 east. I-5 north crosses the Marquam bridge. After crossing the bridge, get into the far right lane and take exit 300, OMSI/Central Eastside Business Dist. At the stop sign take a left onto Water Ave., after about five blocks it curves to the right and turns into SE Stark St. Turn right on SE 11th Ave and take the first left on SE Washington.

Heading South on I-5: Take I-5 south, as you approach Downtown Portland take the CITY CENTER/ OREGON CITY exit. Follow the sign to OREGON CITY, it is on the left and will place you on a single track ramp curving you off to the left toward the East side of Portland. The ramp leads to SE Belmont St. Get into the center lane and follow Belmont St. to SE 12th Ave. Turn Left on SE 12th and follow it for 3 blocks to the Agency.

Heading East on Highway 26: Upon approaching the Sylvan tunnel, get into the far right lane heading toward The Dalles, Hwy 84. After passing the 6th Ave exit on the right, move into the furthest right lane which leads to the Marquam Bridge. Take the first exit on the right (exit 300, which goes toward The Dalles Hwy 84). Take the next exit to your right "Central Eastside Industrial District/OMSI). Turn left at the stop sign onto SE Water. Stay on SE Water until it makes a 90-degree bend to the right where it turns into SE Stark. Turn right onto SE 11th Ave (SE 11th is one way headed south). Get into the left lane and take the first left off of SE 11th onto SE Washington.

If you have questions, please call 888-202-5463 or 971-673-1588.

The apartments are located at 485 SE 14th Ave

Portland, OR 97214; four blocks from the OCB Portland office.