

Class Concept

Positions in this class provide specialized services to people who are blind or visually impaired. These services include assessments of functional vision and utilization of devices, orientation and mobility assessment and training, and instruction in adaptive techniques. This concept encompasses four roles: low vision therapy, children/student services, orientation and mobility, and vision rehabilitation therapy. The decisions made by the Vision Rehabilitation Specialist can have a direct impact on the safety of the client, staff, and others. Employees have contact with clients, optometrists, staff members, and other vision rehabilitation specialists for the purpose of providing assessments, consultation, and training.

Low Vision Therapy

Employees assess adult clients' needs, determine their functional vision, and assist the client in using their residual vision. Work includes assessing client goals, preliminary clinical assessments, providing onsite functional low vision assessments, comprehensive non-optical device assessments, coordination and scheduling of clinical low vision activities and assessments, dissemination of all functional and clinical findings to the client and direct service staff (classroom teachers, evaluators, orientation and mobility specialists, rehabilitation counselors, principals and center directors), and providing physical therapy to visually impaired clients. Employees provide direct client training to improve low vision device proficiency and maintain low vision clinic equipment and materials. Employees in this role use a variety of low vision optical and non-optical devices including low vision near/distance acuity charts; contrast sensitivity charts, visual field tests, color vision tests, lens meter, video magnifiers, special lighting devices, light absorption lenses, reading stands, and other devices as appropriate. Employees may also be required to provide training to staff members and/or develop relevant policies and procedures.

Student Services

Employees complete a functional low vision evaluation that identifies visual impairments related to performance of developmentally appropriate activities of daily living (dressing appropriately, personal health care and grooming, safe movement, care of orthotic, prosthetic and other health care devices). Work includes assessing client needs and providing instruction of daily living skills (care of self, effective literacy and communication, health management, home management, meal preparation, safety awareness training and shopping). Work includes assessing goals of students and their educational pursuits including life-long learning, vocational pursuits including readiness for future employment and the performance of leisure and social activities. Employee will access and participate in community programs and events. Employees assess the ability of the student to cope with low vision and the impact of the vision disability on significant others and to educate them in understanding the functional implications of vision changes, how the student with low vision is expected to progress through environmental modifications, that will be helpful for enhanced function, coaching for home/school/leisure exercises and adaptation to change when feasible.

Orientation and Mobility

Employees provide individualized orientation and mobility assessments and training for consumers who are blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind. Some Specialists provide instruction in specialized skill areas that will enable the consumers to achieve their independent living, travel, and employment goals. Work includes assessing clients' needs, goals, readiness and motivation to learn orientation and mobility skills; determining client's understanding of spatial and directional concepts; providing one-on-one instruction including concepts and techniques such as sensory/concept development, pre-cane skills, sighted guide, cane techniques, route planning/travel in a variety of situations, soliciting situations, use of public transportation, use of residual vision/low vision aids, orientation to electronic travel aids, and preparation for travel. Employees also participate in staffings, collaborate with teachers and other staff and evaluate services provided as well as plan for future services.

Vision Rehabilitation Therapy

Employees are responsible for areas of instruction in Braille, cooking, techniques of daily living skills, consumer education, technology and other areas as needed. Work performed includes direct instruction of students in classes; collaborating with teachers and other staff. Evaluating services provided and planning for future services, participating in staffings related to consumers who are receiving instruction, providing evaluations of current skill sets and goals and reporting on evaluations as well as progress toward goals.

Recruitment Standards

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Low Vision Therapy and Student Services

- Considerable knowledge of low vision assessment tools and techniques such as optical and non-optical devices including magnifiers, telescopes, video magnifiers, special lighting devices, light absorption lenses, reading stands, etc.
- Considerable knowledge of the functional implications of visual impairments.
- Ability to adapt and communicate with a variety of consumers, families, teachers, rehabilitation counselors, rehabilitation engineers, medical personnel, and other human service professionals.

Orientation and Mobility

- Knowledge of various orientation and mobility devices.
- Considerable knowledge of the functional implications of visual impairments
- Considerable knowledge of mobility theories, techniques and methodologies.
- Skill in using mobility equipment and devices that assist clients with daily living skills.
- Ability to teach consumers of all ages with an understanding of the unique needs of the various age ranges.
- Ability to motivate clients.
- Ability to work collaboratively as part of a teaching team.
- Ability to communicate effectively in writing and orally.

Vision Rehabilitation Therapists

- Considerable knowledge of the functional implications of visual impairments.
- Considerable knowledge of compensatory skills and assistive technology.
- Ability to teach consumers of all ages with an understanding of the unique needs of the various age ranges.
- Ability to motivate clients.
- Ability to work collaboratively as part of a teaching team.
- Ability to communicate effectively in writing and orally.

Minimum Education and Experience

Bachelor's degree in visual impairment field from an appropriately accredited institution and certification by the Academy for Certification of Education and Rehabilitation Professionals (ACVREP) as (1) Certified Low Vision Therapist (CLVT), or (2) Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist, or (3) Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS), or (4) Certified Assistive Technology Instructional Specialist as needed for the area of assignment; or

Bachelor's degree in a related field such as rehabilitation counseling or social work and three years of direct service experience with individuals who are blind or visually impaired and certification as indicated above as needed for the area of assignment.

Applicants who do not possess certification are required to obtain certification within two years from the date of employment.

Management has the option of choosing certification requirements based on the area of assignment in order to meet the needs of the clients and the program.

Recruitment announcements should reflect only one of the certification requirements.

Note: This is a generalized representation of positions in this class and is not intended to identify essential functions per ADA.