

Code of Ethics

The OMAA Code of Ethics identifies the ethical principles, responsibilities and commitments of the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) profession in Australasia, to guide ethical decision-making and actions. The OMAA Code of Ethics should be used in conjunction with the OMAA Standards of Practice.

O&M Specialists pledge themselves to standards of acceptable behaviour in relation to the individuals served, the wider community and the O&M profession. It is the responsibility of each O&M Specialist to review the Code of Ethics regularly, adhere to the principles therein, and encourage colleagues to do the same.

1. Commitment to the Individuals Served

Respect and Equality

- 1.1 The O&M Specialist will value and respect the worth and dignity of each individual served.
- 1.2 The O&M Specialist will deal sensitively with the individual's family, guardians and cultural context.
- 1.3 An individual will not be refused service by the O&M Specialist because of age, gender, race, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.
- 1.4 An individual will not be refused service because of the severity of his or her disabilities unless it is clearly evident that he or she cannot benefit from the service. In the event that the individual's needs cannot be met, the O&M Specialist will make every effort to refer the individual to a more appropriate service provider.
- 1.5 The O&M Specialist will attempt to influence decision-making which establishes the rights of all individuals with blindness or low vision to receive services.

Confidentiality

- 1.6 The O&M Specialist will respect the confidentiality of all information pertaining to individuals served. He or she will not divulge confidential information without the individual's permission unless required by law.
- 1.7 The O&M Specialist will ask the consent of the individual served, or his or her guardian, before inviting others to observe a lesson or arranging to have the individual photographed or recorded.
- 1.8 The O&M Specialist will make all reports objective and will present only data relevant to the purposes of assessment, planning, intervention and evaluation.

Collaboration and learning

- 1.9 The O&M Specialist will collaborate with the individual served to identify his or her needs and to make decisions about intervention which are in the best interests of the individual and relevant others.

- 1.10** The O&M Specialist will strive to maintain the highest standards of education, tailoring interventions to suit the individual's learning needs.
- 1.11** The O&M Specialist will endeavour to identify and address conditions which interfere with learning.
- 1.12** With the individual's consent, the O&M Specialist will endeavour to provide those involved in the individual's life with sufficient knowledge, instruction, training and experiences relative to O&M to secure their support in facilitating the goals of the individual.

Responsibility

- 1.13** The O&M Specialist will accept responsibility for the exercise of his or her own professional judgment related to O&M and seek relevant professional guidance where necessary to make appropriate decisions.
- 1.14** The O&M Specialist will be responsible for O&M services to individuals when any portion of the service is assigned to O&M students, interns or other stakeholders under his or her supervision.
- 1.15** The O&M Specialist will take all reasonable precautions during intervention, to ensure the safety of the individuals served.
- 1.16** The O&M Specialist will not assume responsibilities that are better provided by other professionals who are available to the individual served.

2. Commitment to the Community

Community Education

- 2.1** The O&M Specialist will contribute to community education by using formal and informal opportunities to describe the nature and delivery of O&M services, and to indicate how the community can support the self-determination of people with blindness or low vision.
- 2.2** When community education or media opportunities arise, the O&M Specialist will invite and encourage individuals to share their own experience of blindness or low vision wherever possible.
- 2.3** The O&M Specialist will not engage in any public education activity that results in the exploitation of people with blindness or low vision. Exaggeration, sensationalism, superficiality, and other misleading activities which compromise the equality of people with low vision or blindness are to be avoided.

Interdisciplinary Liaison

- 2.4** The O&M Specialist will seek harmonious relations with members of other professions. This will include the free exchange of ideas regarding the welfare of the individual served, with the individual's consent, and discussion regarding the benefits to be obtained from O&M services.
- 2.5** In such situations where team decisions are made, the O&M Specialist will contribute information from his or her own particular perspective and will abide by the team decision unless the team decision requires that he or she act in violation of the Code of Ethics.

3. Commitment to the Profession

Professional Development

- 3.1** The O&M Specialist will accept responsibility to master and contribute to the growing body of specialised knowledge, concepts, and skills which characterise O&M as a profession.
- 3.2** The O&M Specialist will reflect on interactions with individuals and other stakeholders to determine areas for further learning and self-improvement, and seek feedback on his or her own performance from colleagues and mentors in the field.
- 3.3** The O&M Specialist will strive to improve the quality of services provided and promote conditions that attract suitable people to careers in O&M.
- 3.4** The O&M Specialist will, whenever possible, support, participate in and contribute to the professional body as well as local, state, national and international professional organisations and conferences.

Research

- 3.5** The O&M Specialist will interpret and use the writing and research of others with integrity. In writing, making presentations or conducting research, the O&M Specialist will be familiar with and give recognition to previous work on the topic.
- 3.6** The O&M Specialist will conduct investigations in a manner that takes into consideration the welfare of the individual, and report research in a way which lessens the possibility that the findings will be misleading.
- 3.7** When participating in formal research, the O&M Specialist will adhere to the established ethical principles regarding human research (Declaration of Helsinki 1964, revised 2008) and seek ethical approval from the appropriate body.

Integrity

- 3.8** The O&M Specialist will accept no personal gratuities or gifts of significance over and above the predetermined salary, fee, and/or expense for professional services.
- 3.9** The O&M Specialist will not engage in commercial activities that result in a conflict of interest between these activities and professional objectives with the individual served.
- 3.10** The O&M Specialist involved in development or promotion of O&M devices, books or other products, will present such products in a professional and factual way.
- 3.11** The O&M Specialist will report to the executive of the professional body, suspected and/or known incompetence, illegal or unethical behaviour in the practice of the profession.

Commitment to Colleagues

- 3.12** The O&M Specialist will communicate fully and openly with colleagues in the sharing of specialised knowledge, concepts, and skills.
- 3.13** The O&M Specialist will strive to provide fair treatment to all members of the profession, support them when unjustly accused or mistreated and will not become involved in personal disparagement.
- 3.14** The O&M Specialist will deal respectfully with other service providers chosen by the individual, so that the individual's needs are best served.
- 3.15** When transferring an individual, the O&M Specialist will not commit a receiving professional to a prescribed course of action.

Professional Employment Practices

- 3.16** The O&M Specialist will provide applicants seeking information about a position with an honest description of the assignment, conditions of work, and related matters.
- 3.17** The O&M Specialist will respond factually when asked to recommend a colleague seeking a professional position.
- 3.18** The O&M Specialist will abide by the terms of a contract or agreement, whether verbal or written, unless the terms have been falsely represented or substantially changed by the other party.
- 3.19** The O&M Specialist will not accept employment where proven principles of O&M practice are compromised or abandoned, unless the position is accepted with the intention of amending or modifying the questionable practices and providing that he or she does not participate in behaviour which violates the Code of Ethics.
- 3.20** The O&M Specialist will adhere to the policies and regulations of the employer except where he or she is required to violate ethical principles indicated in this Code. To avoid possible conflicts, the O&M Specialist will acquaint the employer with the contents of this Code.
- 3.21** The O&M Specialist may provide professional service through private contracts, as long as these services remain of the highest quality and do not conflict with professional duties undertaken in an agency context.
- 3.22** The O&M Specialist will not accept remuneration for professional services from an individual who is entitled to receive free services, without first informing the individual of the free services available.

The OMAA Code of Ethics was developed by the OMAA Standards Committee from 2009, reviewed by the O&M Profession in Australia and New Zealand through a multi-phase process and **ratified by the OMAA AGM in November 2013**. The OMAA Standards Committee included Lil Deverell (chair, lead author), Nicola Misso (minutes), Mark Battista, Bashir Ebrahim, Dr Steve La Grow and Bronwen Scott then later, Paul Adrian and Jeremy Hill.

Influential documents included the ACVREP Code of Ethics for O&M Specialists (1991, acvrep.org/downloads/CODE%20OF%20ETHICS%20FOR%20OM%20Specialists.doc) and ethics documents from teaching and allied health professions in Australia and New Zealand.