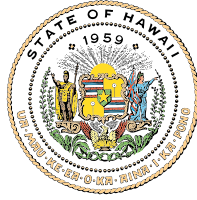


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI  
SUPERINTENDENT  
**DEPT. COMM. NO. 222**

**STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804**

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

December 22, 2022

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi, President  
and Members of the Senate  
State Capitol, Room 409  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Scott K. Saiki, Speaker  
and Members of the House of Representatives  
State Capitol, Room 431  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Saiki, and Members of the Legislature:

For your information and consideration, I am transmitting a copy of the report, Recruitment and Employment of Blind Persons in Instructional Positions, pursuant to Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 1, H.D. 1, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022. In accordance with Section 93-16, Hawaii Revised Statutes, I am also informing you that the report may be viewed electronically at:  
<http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/VisionForSuccess/SchoolDataAndReports/StateReports/Pages/Legislative-reports.aspx>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Keith T. Hayashi".

Keith T. Hayashi  
Superintendent

KTH:bs

c: Legislative Reference Bureau  
Hawaii State Public Library System  
University of Hawaii  
Office of Talent Management



State of Hawaii  
Department of Education

# **Report on Recruitment and Employment of Blind Persons in Instructional Positions**

December 2022

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 1, Session Laws of Hawaii 2022, requires the Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) to report on its efforts to recruit and employ blind persons in instructional positions with the Department including the actions taken, progress made, and any proposed legislation.

## LEGISLATIVE REPORT

In order to recruit and employ blind persons in instructional positions with the Department, The Office of Student Support Services is currently working with the Office of Talent Management on establishing a position that delivers Orientation and Mobility (O&M) as a related service provider (non-teacher type). The position would require a bachelor's degree and also knowledge and experience working with school-aged children from three to twenty-two years old.

The O&M specialist will provide:

- Direct instruction to teach formal O&M skills to students who are blind or visually impaired;
- Assessments of abilities and needs of individual students for O&M services;
- Guidance and support as a member of an Individualized Education Program/Section 504 team in assessing information, developing goals, and providing recommendations for O&M services, if needed; and
- Consultation to school staff, teachers, parents, and other related service providers regarding school/classroom/home adaptations, assistive technology, best practices, instruction, etc.

The O&M specialist must either be a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) or hold National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC).

### **1) Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS)**

A COMS specializes in working with individuals with visual impairments and may themselves be blind, partially sighted or sighted. A COMS uses guided exploration and problem solving to teach visually impaired people strategies which utilize both non-visual and visual techniques.

### **2) National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC)**

The NOMC is a credentialing process administered by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board and includes training in utilizing a technique called Structured Discovery Cane Travel (SDCT)™. The methods and principles of SDCT are derived from the lived experiences of blind individuals who have shared their experiences, attitudes, and techniques with each other.

Historically, the Department's O&M services have been provided by individuals who have a degree in education and hold certification as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI). The creation of the O&M Specialist position as a related service provider widens the application pool by allowing for individuals without a degree in education to be employed. Furthermore, the NOMC, has a performance-based qualification procedure that requires sighted or partially blind candidates to wear sleep shades and demonstrate an ability to perform the techniques for indoor and outdoor travel that they are expected to teach visually impaired students. This makes the certification process for NOMC less sight-based. The NOMC's emphasis on nonvisual technique expertise and a performance component leads to more blind individuals choosing the NOMC over the COMS certification. The Department is accepting either of these certifications as a way to broaden the applicant field to include more blind individuals.

Once the O&M Specialist position has been established and publicly advertised, the Department will collaborate with local organizations, such as Ho'opono Services for the Blind, Hawaii

Association of the Blind, and Guide Dogs of Hawaii, to increase awareness of the employment opportunity and attract potential qualified applicants. The Department will also expand its recruitment efforts to include the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, the National Federation of the Blind, and colleges that have TVI and O&M Education programs such as the University of Arizona, University of Northern Colorado, California State University, Los Angeles, Florida State, and Portland State University.

The Department does not discriminate in its educational policies, programs, and activities on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, and disability in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991.

The Department does not discriminate in its employment policies, programs, and activities on the basis of sexual orientation, arrest and court record, and National Guard participation, as well as on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, and disability, in accordance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991, Equal Pay Act of 1963, and Hawaii Revised Statutes Chapter 378, Hawaii Employment Practices, Part I, Discriminatory Practices.

At this time, there are no suggestions for any proposed legislation around the recruitment and employment of blind persons in instructional positions within the Department.