

## Position Paper

### A Best Practice Approach Determining Highly Qualified Travel Instructors

This paper intends to provide information on what CEATI considers best practice for the profession of travel instruction. As with many emerging occupations, a standard of competence must be determined and a method for evaluating these skills is essential. The recipients of travel instruction and their families must have assurance that the persons providing travel instruction is a skilled instructor. In addition, agencies, and employers of travel instructors must have some method for assuring the qualifications as well.

**Definition:** Travel instructors are professionals who teach independent travel skills in the community which may include the use of public transportation to persons with disabilities and seniors.

This document provides initial qualifications, specific essential preparation requirements, and required demonstrated field competencies. As a developing profession, it is anticipated that the next decade will experience a tremendous growth in this field, making didactic coursework as well as a field practicum at Universities a fundamental and mandatory requirement for travel instructors. In the interim, the practical applications noted below will be an initial step for developing the following competencies in prospective travel instructors. The following listed are the minimal educational requirements, and a partial list of demonstrated field practice or experiential requirements. Please visit our website at [www.CEATI-travelinstruction.org](http://www.CEATI-travelinstruction.org)

#### *Bachelor's Degree*

<i>Certification:</i>	Special Education Certificate
<i>Experiential Requirements:</i>	450 hours of documented practical application or supervised by a travel instructor with a minimum of 5 years of experience

CEATI recognizes that presently there exists few travel instructors who meet the criteria of those listed above. However there are multiple ways with which experiential requirements can be fulfilled. The practical application requirements could include a combination of: direct supervised instruction, distance learning as well as video-taping instruction which can be evaluated by an experienced travel instructor.

CEATI recognizes that many travel instructors are supervised by managers or employed by agencies that have no experience or direct knowledge of the profession. CEATI will offer inservice education to enhance the awareness and understanding of the profession for supervisors of travel instruction program.

#### *Field Practice Competencies Specific to the Teaching of Travel Instruction*

The following is a partial list of skills which must be demonstrated and documented in order for a Travel Instructor to be determined competent in the field

There are specific skills that a Travel Instructor must be competent for teaching a person with a disability to travel in the community. Western Michigan University (WMU) developed Academic Competencies for the Effective Practice of Travel Instruction and Curriculum Areas for the Preparation of the Travel Instructor. These include concepts such as:

- Assessment procedures for determining the student's readiness for travel instruction
- The appropriate procedures used to assess orientation and travel skills in the areas such as motor, cognitive, language, and sensory skills
- The general and specific features in an environment that affect accessibility and travel by students with disabilities
- How to analyze intersections to determine best locations for negotiating street crossings by students with differing disabilities
- The process for selecting travel route and mode of transit based on analysis of environment, student's abilities and student and family preference
- Knowledge and understanding of fixed route transit systems in the community where instruction is provided
- Orientation and travel skills including route planning, schedule reading, use of transit maps, analysis of traffic patterns and street crossings and adaptive techniques
- Teaching pedestrian skills appropriate to the functional level of the student
- Methods to modify instruction in travel skills and techniques that are appropriate for students with unique individual needs
- Observation skills, the ability to interpret and analyze observations, and the flexibility to change lessons and program sequence based upon resulting evaluations
- Establishing and maintaining an appropriate position and physical distance between the instructor and the student for effective instruction and safety
- In monitoring the student demonstrating the ability to determine and respond effectively to the position, movement, and safety of the student at all times
- Reporting and record keeping that accurately reflects the student's level of independence in travel and documents both strengths and needs for skill development
- Effectively evaluating student progress, and accurately assessing the use of previously learned skills once the student is traveling unassisted.

These are just a few of the wide range of skills that are the foundation of a travel instructor's expertise. This knowledge and skill enables the instructor to accurately assess student performance and environmental factors through observations as well as make recommendations and implement instruction that is appropriate to the student's individual needs.

\*This is a brief overview of the WMU competencies. For a complete list of competencies see our link to *Travel Instruction for People with Disabilities: A Standards and Curriculum Development Project*, produced by Western Michigan University (1998). These competencies were adapted from the original publication funded through a Project Action grant.

### ***Travel Instruction as part of the Life Continuum***

#### ***Teaching of Purposeful Movement***

Travel instructors demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed to design experiences that teach children at an early age how to move safely and purposefully. For certain populations, such as those with cognitive disabilities, the ability to discern social and environmental cues associated with movement and the ability to independently initiate actions may not occur naturally. Travel instructors are aware that purposeful movement, or the ability to direct one's own actions to

fulfill needs, is the foundation that underlies the development of independence in negotiating travel related situations. Purposeful movement encompasses one's awareness of their surroundings, ability to initiate and sustain movement, ability to protect oneself from danger, and ability to make decisions and solve problem situations without assistance.

Purposeful movement is a skill which should be introduced at an early age, as appropriate to the social and emotional development of the individual. Acquisition of these skills promotes the capability for the maximum level of independence which can be achieved during the transitional years.

#### *An Integral Part of the Transition Process*

Travel instructors play a critical role during the transition years for a student with a disability. Based upon the assessment, the travel instructor can determine if the ability to learn to use public transportation is a viable goal or if the individual's personal travel needs are best met through Paratransit, or perhaps a combination of both.

Travel instructors should be consulted when seeking post-secondary employment or education. Not only are Travel Instructor's able to evaluate the transportation needs of a student, but they can also determine the travel feasibility for the route.

Frequently opportunities are lost for the student when travel needs were not one of the primary considerations.

#### *As an older adult*

One of the major problems facing the growing senior citizen population is the lack of transportation services provided to them, which leads to isolation for many individuals. Many seniors do not know that ADA Paratransit isn't an age based service and that they must have a disability which prevents them from using the fixed route transportation service to qualify. Travel instructors can play an important role in giving this population mobility and their freedom to move about the community independently.

Most senior citizens find that they are capable of using fixed route transportation services after training and that it is convenient for them to do so. Travel instructors can help seniors face and cope with fears that they may have about traveling independently in the community. With the help of a travel instructor, seniors can learn to navigate the transit system without the restrictions that ADA Paratransit Service can place on them.

#### *Professional Collaboration*

Travel instructors frequently collaborate with professionals who can provide assistance or support for the development of independence. Although not fully inclusive, below is a list of some of the professionals or agencies with whom a travel instructor may interact.

Educational professionals such as special education teachers can offer support by reviewing life skills such as the reading of transit schedules. In addition many referrals for travel instruction come from educators as part of the IEP process. Occupational Therapists and Physical Therapists can help with personal care concerns or the development of life skills, a traveler who has cerebral palsy.

For those within the school age system, or young adults, it is essential to develop a positive working relationship with the families. So often the thought of independence can be quite

daunting. However, families must buy into the process not only as they can provide support and encouragement when necessary, as well as opportunities to practice the skills learned so the efforts of a travel instructor are not in vain. Families frequently have a wealth of information to offer, as they can provide insights as well.

The transit personnel can provide support by offering bus demonstrations, reviewing the securement features for mobility devices, and practicing vehicle evacuation techniques.

There are various federal, statewide, and community agencies which can offer support to a travel instructor. For example, in many travel instruction programs, Police Departments can perform "stranger approaches" to test an individual's ability to refuse an inappropriate request, Department of Transportation can offer inservices to travel instructors to explain traffic signalization, as well as consider altering an intersection to ease pedestrian crossing.

Medical professionals such as Neuro-Ophthalmologists, Cognitive Neurologists, and Neuro-Psychologists can also provide inservices for travel instructors on the impact of various disabilities in the development of independence. It is critical for instructors to stay abreast of new information.

It is essential to be familiar and have interaction with adult service agencies (such as Office of Vocational Rehabilitation) as well as advocacy groups. Some travel instruction programs have contracts to provide training to their clients. But even beyond that, travel instructors need to be well versed on the programs which are available for persons with disabilities.

Travel instructors perform their jobs in the community. This is their classroom. Developing relationships with outside agencies is beneficial for everyone. For more information, please see the Position Paper on Collaboration located on our website, [www.ceati-travelinstruction.org](http://www.ceati-travelinstruction.org)

#### ***Professional Development (On-Going)***

Through the development of a professional portfolio, the travel instructor will maintain an ongoing personnel record of their professional development. This includes attendance at conferences and seminars and continuing education provided to other professional and parents. Professional evaluations will also be included in this portfolio.

#### ***Professional Ethics and Instructional Considerations***

CEATI will be developing a position paper which will address a Code of Ethics for travel instructors.

#### ***Professional Ethics and Instructional Considerations***

The instructor's mission is to enable safe independent travel in the desired travel environments. Because trainees' functional abilities and experience vary, the number of training sessions required and the time spent on each subject area will also vary by individual. To the level of independence capable for the particular individual, and for reasons of safety, the instructional process must be considered complete only when the trainee has demonstrated competency in each/all elements of the travel route and within the desired travel environment—where, and when, the individual needs to travel. For some individuals this may mean independent travel to a specific destination, for others the level of independence may be that of an internal environment. It is the travel instructor's responsibility to provide the instruction based upon the individual's capabilities and to the ultimate level of independence which can be safely achieved.

When providing instruction, ethical travel instructors do not discriminate based upon racial, social or economic factors. Considerations of race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, economic level, politics, personal convenience, etc., can play no part in allocating, planning or providing services. Instruction is to be provided regardless of where the learner may reside and during the time of day and day of week when the individual needs to travel, rather than according to the trainer's convenience or perceived personal safety.

### *Summary*

Travel instruction has specific competency development which must be acquired. Professionals such as special education teachers, orientation and mobility specialists, and physical therapists, have related skills content. It is essential for the safety of the individual receiving travel instruction, their parents or guardians as well as the agency which employs the travel instructor to provide the documentation of the competency of the travel instructor. This competency can be demonstrated by successful completion of the didactic course work recommended as well as the successful completion of the 450 hours of practical application. The practical application needs to include demonstration of teaching skills to individuals with a variety of disabilities.