O&M/ECC Bill: Ready to Fly!

Update from the CAOMS FAPE Committee

1/20/19

As many of you know, the CAOMS *ad hoc* FAPE Committee has been working for more than a year to address the problem of school districts limiting off-campus O&M lessons. In January of 2018, the FAPE Committee conducted a survey of O&M specialists throughout California. Of the 64 O&M Specialists who responded, representing 53 different school districts and SELPAs, 39% reported that they cannot provide adequate community-based instruction because they are not permitted to drive their students and are not provided with viable transportation through the school system. Some districts, shockingly, do not allow O&Ms to conduct lessons on public transportation! The FAPE Committee’s legal counsel agrees that such practices are a violation of the IDEA. More importantly, such limitations mean that many of our visually impaired youth are graduating from high school without the O&M skills they need to succeed in adult life.

To address this serious problem, the FAPE Committee initiated a community organizing campaign using a dual bottom-up, top-down approach. The Committee stated with outreach to O&Ms, parents, advocacy groups, education professionals, and professionals in community-based non-profit organizations to establish a coalition of individuals committed to correcting this injustice. Two lawyers associated with our work, including a representative of Disability Rights of California, are available to talk to parents concerned about their children’s services. In addition, the Committee also has been working on a bill to present to the state legislature. We have reached a major milestone in our journey!

On Friday, January 19, Jeff Thom, Governmental Affairs Director for the California Council of the Blind and the chief architect of the bill, reported, “I am extremely pleased to report that **Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk-Silva will be introducing our special education bill this year**. It is only one step in what will undoubtedly be a long road, but it is a major step and the work is well worth it for our students who are blind or have low vision. If we continue the great collaboration between advocates, parents, and those in the field, we can make a real difference.”

What you can do:

* Read the CAOMS newsletters and emails.
* Be on the lookout for Action Alerts, and take action!
* Contact us: caomsfape@gmail.com.
* **We will need your support!**