

MMP Program History

The Dayle McIntosh Center for the Disabled (DMC) had the pleasure of partnering with the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) from 2009 through June 30th, 2022, a total of thirteen years. Through New Freedom and Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funding, DMC was able to launch and sustain the Mobility Management Program (MMP). A total of eleven staff joined our team over the course of the program's life, one of them being the current Executive Director at DMC. Many of the staff have gone on to fill other positions within our Center and/or work for other community-based organizations who also serve the disabled community.

Here is a chronological list of individuals who have been part of the MMP staff:

- Janice Wright, MMP Coordinator
- Michael Castillo, Travel Trainer
- Mayra Pizeno, Travel Trainer
- Grace Shepherd, Program Supervisor
- Brittany Zazueta, MMP Coordinator
- Helena Gutierrez, Travel Trainer
- Ivan Cortez, Lead Travel Trainer
- Mir Aminy, Travel Trainer
- Patrica (Patty) Valdez, Travel Trainer
- Gricelda Pena, Orientation and Mobility Instructor
- Guadalupe Vazquez, Travel Trainer



Image Description: Ivan, Grace, and Gricelda representing MMP at DMC's Open House

Program Overview:

The Mobility Management Program provided one-to-one instruction for people with disabilities and older adults, who wanted to learn to use public transportation including trip planning, practicing travel routes, and best practices for bus safety. The services also included assistance with reduced fare applications, help understanding and navigating OC ACCESS paratransit services, and group trainings for students with disabilities.

The New Freedom funding expanded the transportation and mobility options available to persons with disabilities and senior beyond the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act. The grant allowed for training to target places the consumer wanted to learn to travel to such as recreational places like parks, friend houses, retail stores.

Under JARC funding, low-income individuals with disabilities received transportation assistance for employment-related purposes. The goal of JARC funding was to teach consumers how to navigate the OC Bus system to reach destinations such as libraries, school campuses, Goodwill, malls for job opportunities, and job fairs.

All consumers requesting services had to be screened for eligibility which includes being a resident of Orange County, person with a disability or older adult, low-income, and seeking employment (JARC specific). The primary source of referrals was OC ACCESS, Department of Rehabilitation, social services agencies, OC Regional Center, special education and adult transitions program teachers, and self-referrals. If consumer needed to be certified for OCTA ACCESS services, the program staff would help them through all phases of the eligibility process from the application to in-person interviews and functional assessments.



Image Description: Mir on the left of an ACCESS bus, smiling and talking to the driver (left). Helena and Grace reading the sign at a bus stop (right).

DMC collaborated with the following community partners to offer travel training and bus safety education:

- Coastline Community College
- Department of Rehabilitation
- North Orange Continuing Education
- OC ACCESS
- Regional Center
- Saddleback College
- Santa Ana Community College
- Wilshire Continuing Education Center
- Orange County High Schools, including:
 - Brea-Olinda
 - Costa Mesa
 - Cypress
 - Estancia
 - Fullerton Union
 - Irvine
 - La Habra
 - La Sierra
 - Loara
 - Magnolia
 - Mission Viejo
 - Ocean View
 - Savannah
 - Sonora
 - Sunny Hills
 - Troy
 - Western
- Orange County Adult Transition Programs (ATP), including:
 - Huntington Beach
 - La Sierra
 - Jordan
 - Gilbert



Image Description: Nelly and Ivan tabling at an adult transition resource night.

Through MMP, the Center was able to support a total of 1,261 seniors and people with disabilities in accomplishing their goals to travel safely and independently using public transportation. MMP staff conducted a total of 8,150 one-way trips with consumers on the fixed route bus system. Presentations on bus safety were provided to 851 high school classrooms and senior centers throughout Orange County. Additionally, the team participated in a total of 568 outreach events in which the public was informed of transportation options and DMC's services.



Image Description: Two side by side photos showing adult transition students during group training sessions.

Challenges Faced:

The Mobility Management Program faced challenges during its time in operation. In South Orange County, there were limited routes and infrequent bus schedules due to low ridership. Additionally, even with a well-planned trip, travel training still took more time than expected because of missed connections, bad weather, and unexpected detours. Additionally, the fixed route bus system is not fully accessible for all disabilities. At times, the bus driver's announcements were not loud enough for passengers to hear. People who are Deaf or hard of hearing need tools like monitors with sign language interpreters and other information in ASL. Another example is a need for Braille, large print, and other formats for bus stop signs and the bus book. Finally, there was an ongoing challenge with ensuring that the program remained consumer driven, with the individual in charge of their travel training goals. At times parents, teachers, and counselors needed them to travel to school or job locations, but the consumer set goals for fun places like Downtown Disney, their friend's house or the mall.

The Mobility Management Program concluded in 2022 due to the termination of JARC and New Freedom funding. However, DMC is committed to reviving the program by seeking new funding opportunities through OCTA and other available sources.

DMC Team Member Recollections

DMC received a request for travel training from a young person with developmental and visual disabilities. This individual had been accepted as a volunteer at the Santa Ana Library, but their schedule conflicted with the availability of family members who could provide transportation. Eager to learn how to ride the bus independently, they faced rejections from other organizations, which doubted their ability to travel safely due to their disabilities.

The Travel Trainers in DMC's Mobility Management Program did not have prior experience in training someone with a visual disability, so they decided to collaborate with DMC's Aging with Vision Loss (AVL) program. This partnership aimed to learn best practices and adapt current bus training methods for someone with low vision. Through this collaboration, the Travel Trainers learned how to provide sighted guide assistance, use verbal leash techniques, and participated in simulations of various visual disabilities by wearing low vision goggles. Following their training, the Travel Trainers led the AVL team on a bus trip, practicing and demonstrating the new techniques. This internal collaboration resulted in a rich learning experience and an improvement in services for consumers of both programs.

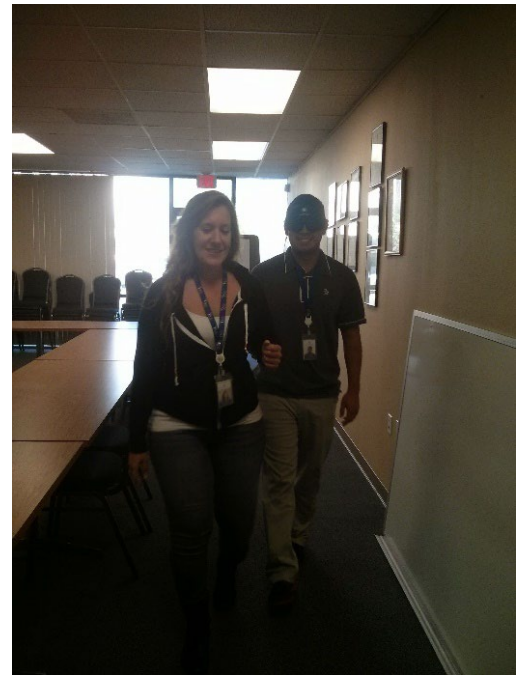


Image description: Ivan, Michelle, and Socorro during the MMP and AVL travel training in 2014 (left). Brittany practices providing sighted guide with Ivan, he wears a blindfold and holds her arm (right).

Armed with new skills and confidence, the Travel Trainer worked with the young person to offer bus training using these adapted techniques. They practiced the route from the individual's home to the Santa Ana Library multiple times. The training expanded to additional locations, including Santa Ana College, the Department of Rehabilitation in Anaheim, and even DMC. Their newfound independence didn't stop there, because they no longer had to rely on others for transportation, the consumer successfully graduated from college and secured employment. This story exemplifies the power of adaptability and finding solutions, showcasing the impact of collaboration and innovative training methods informed by people with lived experience.

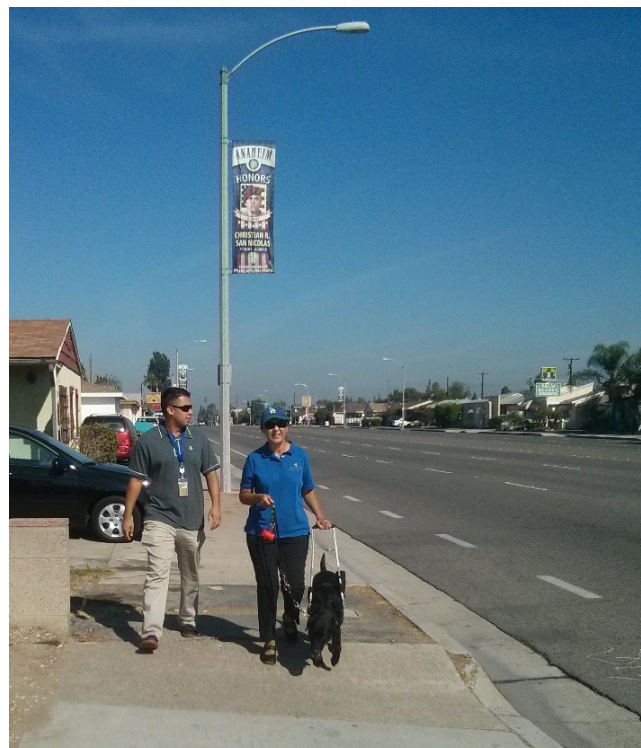


Image description: Ivan, Socorro, and a guide dog Nina walking down Brookhurst towards the bus stop.

A young person with autism loved football because of its clear rules and strategies. When they wanted to learn how to ride the fixed route bus, their travel trainer used football examples to help. The bus stops were like goalposts, each route a different play, and the driver was like a quarterback leading the team. With each trip, they saw themselves moving down the field, with each stop being a completed pass. This familiar idea made the bus system easier to understand and gave them more confidence. Soon, they were riding the bus routes just like they played football, celebrating each successful trip like scoring a touchdown.



Image Description: Youth Summer Academy participants boarding the bus with the support of MMP staff.

In 2017, the Dayle McIntosh Center hosted a Youth Summer Academy which involved a beach day. The Mobility Management Team partnered with the Youth Program to hold a group bus travel training session for the attendees to Huntington Beach. The group travel training consisted of a trip planning workshop to plan the trip from the

DMC office to Huntington Beach. The bus utilized was route 35 going southbound on Brookhurst, which lasted for approximately one hour with the final stop ending right at the beach. An Orientation and Mobility instructor accompanied the group to assist a youth with a visual disability in navigating the bus route. The group learned how to trip plan and basic bus safety rules including how to board and exit the bus.



Image Description: Youth Summer Academy participants and staff celebrating their successful trip to the beach.

Here are some consumer stories that highlight the success of MMP:

A consumer requested travel training from his home located in Laguna Beach “On Top of the World” to Saddleback College in Mission Viejo. Due to the location, the Travel Trainer and consumer had to take a trolley from Top of the World to the Laguna Beach Bus Station to board route 1 and then transfer to route 91 in Dana Point. The consumer learned how to Text for Next and how to use Google Maps for trip planning. The consumer was able to get to college on his own independently. This consumer later volunteered with the DMC Youth Program and now he is employed with DMC as an independent living skills instructor.

A senior who became disabled after a brain aneurysm reached out to DMC for assistance with learning how to use the fixed route bus. Since becoming disabled, he had been living in a group home and felt very isolated. He expressed a desire to learn how to ride the fixed-route bus to various destinations, including the local store, library, and community college, where regular baseball games were open to the public. The Travel Trainer met him at the group home and conducted several training sessions for each location. After he successfully learned the route to the store, they progressed to the library, which was a further distance. Once he mastered the trip to the library, they tackled the final destination, the community college, which required the use of two buses. With time and patience, the senior was able to learn all three routes, enabling him to access the community and significantly reducing his isolation.

Image Description: An older adult consumer smiling while he waits on a bench at a bus stop.

A 17-year-old with autism requested bus training to get to Cypress College. He is graduating next month and will attend Cypress College next school year. The Lead Travel Trainer provided three days of bus training. The student learned to plan trips by checking bus times with Text 4 Next and using Moovit on his smartphone. The trainer also helped him apply for the Youth Ride Free Program, allowing him to ride the OC Bus for free until he turns 18. Once enrolled, he can continue to ride for free with his Cypress College ID card.

Through the partnership with OCTA, the Center was also able to have two staff members participate in an advisory board where they shared important information regarding the transportation needs and barriers faced by seniors and the disability community. Additionally, the bus safety presentations to high school students created lasting partnerships with special education teachers and direct referral opportunities to DMC's other services such as independent living skills and youth transition into adulthood. A final highlight for DMC staff was being able to participate in a photoshoot with OCTA for ACCESS paratransit services. DMC remains grateful for the many opportunities and experiences afforded to our consumers, staff, and Center through the valuable partnership with OCTA.



Image Description: DMC staff posing in front of an OCTA ACCESS bus in 2017.