



Poster Presentation

Preparing the Body and the Environment. Orientation and Mobility for Individuals with CHARGE Syndrome

Suzanne Dinwiddie, M.Ed., Tennessee Deaf-Blind Project
Lee Ellen Whitefield, M.Ed., Metro Nashville Public Schools
Kristi Jones, Tennessee Deaf-Blind Project

Presenter Information

Suzanne Dinwiddie, M.Ed., COMS, CTVI, CEIM is an educational consultant for the Tennessee Deaf-Blind Project. Suzanne is a certified teacher of individuals who are blind or visually impaired, an early childhood assessment specialist and a certified orientation and mobility instructor with over 44 years of experience. Suzanne is a reoccurring lecturer for Vanderbilt University and conducts regional and statewide workshops regarding best practices in early intervention, literacy for children with complex learning/medical needs, Deaf-Blindness, and orientation and mobility strategies for individuals with dual sensory loss, physical limitations and infants/toddlers.

Lee Ellen Whitefield has worked in the field of Exceptional Education for over 20 years. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Education of Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing Pre K–12, and Elementary Education K–5 from Eastern Kentucky University (1996). She earned a Master's Degree in Education of Students with Visual Impairments Pre K–12 at Vanderbilt University (2001) as well as an additional certification in Orientation and Mobility from Pennsylvania College of Optometry (2005). Lee Ellen is currently working as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist in Metro Nashville Public Schools. She enjoys encouraging students with visual impairments, who have a wide range of abilities, to move and travel as independently as possible.

Kristi Jones works as the Family Specialist for TNDB and as Tennessee's CHARGE Liaison for the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation. She is passionate about connecting families affected by Deaf-Blindness to local resources and support systems. Most importantly, Kristi is the mother of a 19-year-old daughter with CHARGE.

Presentation Abstract

Orientation and Mobility Instructors (O&M) working with individuals with CHARGE Syndrome must address the significant impact of balance and low muscle tone. Low muscle tone slows response and individuals need extra time to achieve balance while moving. Balance is achieved and maintained by coordinating sensory input from vision, proprioception, and the vestibular systems. Balance systems allow individuals to resist gravity, determine direction and speed of movement, and make postural adjustments to maintain posture and stability when traveling on a variety of surfaces. Modified O&M techniques and strategies can increase balance and endurance by structuring the environment, incorporating exercises into daily routines, and instructing adults on how to modify travel techniques to address safety. Some strategies discussed will include adapted mobility devices, stability landmarks within daily routes, using task analyses to "break down" transitional movements, and incorporating adaptive exercises and PE strategies.