

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES AND HARD OF HEARING OR LATE-DEAFENED COLLEGE STUDENTS

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SUMMARY

The VR Program

To provide quality services to this population, VR and postsecondary staff must understand the diverse and significant needs of these consumers and assist them in making appropriate "informed choices" to become successfully employed in careers commensurate with their capabilities and interests. They will need to recognize that these unique consumers do not fit the culturally deaf service model. VR professionals working together with postsecondary service providers can help these students get training that leads to successful employment and careers.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

Hard of Hearing (HH) persons

Have some degree of hearing loss ranging from mild to profound as defined by audiological measurement;

- Can benefit to some extent from the use of hearing aids or other assistive listening devices;
- Depend primarily upon spoken or written English in communicating with others (do not rely on any form of sign language as their primary means of communication);
- Function in the hearing world with regard to family, friends, work, and leisure activities (do not have significant association with the should we add Culturally here to clarify the three circles found below Deaf community).

Late-Deafened (LD) persons

Have a severe to profound hearing loss as defined by audiological measurement, which occurred after the development of speech and language;

- Can benefit from the use of visual display technology, but usually benefit very little from hearing aids or other listening technology;
- Depend upon visual representations of English in communicating with others. May have developed

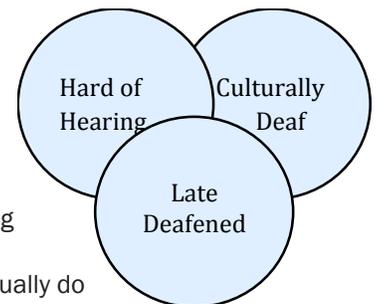
some proficiency in American Sign Language as a second language;

- Function in the hearing world with regard to family, friends, work, and leisure activities and do not have significant association with the Deaf community.

KEY CONCEPTS

Issues in Identification & Service Provision

- Most people who are HH and LD are isolated from others with similar problems, and often minimize or hide their hearing disability.
- HH & LD people usually do not recognize their educational and employment related problems nor what technology and other supports are available to help them cope with their diminished ability to hear.
- VR and education counselors often are not aware that most HH and LD can benefit from a wide range of services in addition to a hearing aid.
- Rather than thinking in terms of decibel loss, VR and education counselors should think of individual functional and communication problems and unique remediation strategies and services.
- Needed and sometimes non-traditional services, such as speech-reading, listening practice, and learning coping strategies, are not readily available and may need to be developed.
- A coordinated VR/education/student team is essential to successful training resulting in quality employment outcomes.



SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

Create Specialized VR Agency Programs

- Programs for HH/LD persons should be based on a formal assessment of the current level and quality of services for that population, and a resultant strategic plan should be developed to meet specialized staffing, policy, and practices needs.
- Counselors should be knowledgeable about this population and effective in communication/technology strategies they use.
- In-depth training focusing on unique psychosocial, communication, and technology needs of HH and LD population.
- Mandated VR Memorandums of Understanding with colleges and community colleges should include captioning services and ALDs.
- Information about HH/LD should be infused into Rehabilitation Counseling Masters degree training programs.

Actions needed by the State VR agency

Improve Identification and outreach

- Because students who are HH/LD are not easily identified, VR counselors will need to do creative outreach to high school and postsecondary programs and educate them to recognize appropriate referrals to VR.
- VR counselors will need to be active participants in high school transition plans.
- VR/education/student collaboration is essential beginning at referral.

Collect Assessment Information

- Nature and level of hearing loss
- Communication preference and functioning (both expressive and receptive) in various environments (one-on-one; small and large groups; telephone, classroom; social environments; home surroundings)
- Personal and psychological adjustment to, and acceptance of, the hearing loss
- Reason(s) why individual cannot secure or retain a job
- Family, work, and social relationships

Create a Plan of Service (IPE)

- Impediments to employment must be stated in functional terms, so that the impact on the current job or the consumer's ability to get a job is clearly understood.

- The consumer must be an active participant in plan development and have a vested interest in its employment goal and services leading to a successful outcome.
- Arrange for non-traditional services including:
 - ✓ Psychological counseling
 - ✓ Confidence building
 - ✓ Coping skills support groups
 - ✓ Relaxation training
 - ✓ Assistive listening and alerting devices
 - ✓ Speechreading training
 - ✓ Consumer support groups
 - ✓ Communication skills training
 - ✓ Worksite assessment
 - ✓ Job seeking skills, job development, and job placement
 - ✓ Advocacy training

Achieve Closure

- Maintain significant contact between the counselor and consumer is recommended after suitable job placement, and prior to case closure, to ascertain that the consumer has achieved a satisfactory vocational adjustment and to ensure that the employment is suited to the consumer's educational and aptitudinal abilities. Monitoring should include:
 - ✓ Employer awareness and acceptance of the consumer's hearing loss
 - ✓ Workplace environment arrangement to best facilitate communication
 - ✓ Use of assistive listening devices
 - ✓ Supervisor and co-worker comfort and success in communicating with the consumer
 - ✓ Appropriate accommodations at staff meetings and training
- Provide appropriate post-employment services including:
 - ✓ Consultation or technical assistance to supervisors to address new communication, accommodation, technology or other issues
 - ✓ Replacement or repair of hearing aids. The consumer should be advised before case closure that she or he may have to pay for these instruments, depending upon personal income and other conditions. Options for funding through savings plans and programs through employer should also be discussed.
 - ✓ Troubleshooting and problem-solving in work conflict situations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Hard of Hearing Students in Postsecondary Settings: A Guide for Service Providers: Chapter Four, Watson, D., Schroedel J. G., Kolvitz, M., DeCaro, J., Kavin, D. –University of Tennessee College of Education, Health, and Human Services Center on Deafness–May 2007.

For information about VR eligibility and services, see

PEPNet Tipsheet: Vocational Rehabilitation for Postsecondary Programs that Serve Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing–Tomlinson, P.–PEPNet Northeast, Rochester Institute of Technology, National Technical Institute for the Deaf (2000)

For information about how to assess and develop specialized VR programs and services for this population, see

Model State Plan for VR Services to Persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing or Late Deafened, 2008

<http://www.lulu.com/content/2289052>

Council of State VR Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)

<http://www.rehabnetwork.org>

Committee on Services for Individuals who are Deaf, Deaf Blind, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened.

This committee considers issues, policies and programs impacting services for individuals who are deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing and late deafened through the public Vocational Rehabilitation program.

University of Arkansas Rehabilitation Research and Training Center for Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (UARRTC)

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States that have developed specialized VR programs for HH and LD include:

- Alabama
- California
- Kentucky
- New Jersey

For information on individual state programs:

<http://www.rehabnetwork.org>

Contact State Directors

For more information contact:

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