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An Effective Placement Program for Deaf Clients

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There are some factors within a placement process which warrant particular attention. Perhaps the factors can be illustrated by the following story which began in the fall of 1967.

Susan has begun her evening duties as night shift leader in the federal Systems Division Computer Center of Univac, Division of Sperry Rand, one of the world's largest companies. Susan is responsible for twelve keypunch machines on the 4:30 to midnight shift. Throughout the evening she will handle numerous questions from her operators and receive inquiries from programmers on a variety of questions ranging from "Where is the Computer?" to "How can I use the Computer to program this system for the upcoming moon shot?"

In Univac's Plant 6, Julius and Dick have just completed their day's activity, working on technical data manuals that will eventually be read by computer operators the world over. In Plant No. 3 Joe is relaying instructions to the 4:30 shift.

Our friends have one thing in common. They are deaf employees. They are but a few in number of the total of 8,000 employees of this company.

Univac's association with deaf people began in White Sands, New Mexico, in 1956. Two recent graduates of Gallaudet College, Earl and Orville, were on their first Federal Civil Service assignment, working on project AEROBEE'HI, one of our country's first outer space weather reconnaissance missiles. Their work brought them into close contact with Univac personnel. Their contacts extended beyond the workday and into the bowling alleys where a number of the bowlers quickly became friends.
One of these bowlers was Ernest G. Runyon. Ernie, or Tut as he is better known, was fascinated by the language of signs and quite interested in his new friends. He learned the basics of manual communication and took great pleasure in using this means of "talking". This interest continued until Tut was transferred back to St. Paul in July 1960.

From July 1960 until September 1964 this interest was latent. Tut spoke frequently of his past association with his deaf friends to his fellow colleagues. In September of 1964, a frantic phone call came from the personnel office. "Tut", the personnel manager said, "we have a deaf person applying for a job; please come and help us interview!" And Tut obliged, as he has done dozens of times. The girl, our Susan, had been referred by Vocational Rehabilitation to Univac. She had been trained through Vocational Rehabilitation sponsorship and had a background of experience in a workshop for a number of months. In all ways she met the criteria for keypunch employment. Univac, an equal opportunity employer, with Tut's assistance, hired her. Within a short time, she became one of the top operators. As often happens the word of Susan's success spread through the deaf community and soon Univac had hired four keypunchers who were deaf. The performance of these girls was so good that the major metropolitan paper carried a feature story on them. The story lead to other openings in other companies located throughout the metropolitan area. Also, the Univac News, which has a worldwide circulation of over 8,000, ran two feature stories on the abilities of these girls.

Susan and her deaf colleagues were graduates of a residential school for the deaf but had not passed the Gallaudet College Entrance Examinations. However, these bright, young people, under the tutelage of Tut, had blossomed into mature capable women.

Our world is different today from what it was when Tut first met a deaf person in 1956. Today we are much more concerned with the basic needs of deaf people than ever before. Two of the basic needs of deaf people are equal assistance in becoming ready for employment, and equal assistance in obtaining employment.

The late G. Dewey Coats (1959) emphasized the job-getting ability of the deaf themselves. He stated:

"Down through the years, the deaf as a group have written a creditable record in gaining and holding jobs by their own efforts. They have pad and pencilled, gestured, half vocalized themselves into a great variety of occupations ranging all the way up to their professions. And today, the great majority continue to land jobs with
little or no help. Remember that State and Federal assistance in placement for the deaf became available only in comparatively recent years.

But praiseworthy as this overall employment record is, I think many observers will agree that there are certain inherent disadvantages in the "Do It Yourself," sink or swim placement policy of past years. One of the things I observed from my long association with the deaf is that their productive potential is too often not put to maximum use."

Stuckless (1967), in a recent address in Pittsburgh, has said:

Society invests a tremendous effort in the education of the deaf child, and expends perhaps $50,000 in the process. Yet frequently, we neglect the very culmination of this education, in a sense the payoff, notably, entrance into adult society by virtue of gainful employment. The student is brought almost within reaching distance of the dignity that comes through work, only to lack that last bit of support that he needs in finding suitable employment."

Coats, Stuckless, and others have challenged those of us in the rehabilitation professions to provide the necessary tools for successful employment. We can examine these tools by looking briefly at some of the unique features of the concepts involved in rehabilitation planning. These concepts apply to the placement function. Rehabilitation, in this instance, applies to vocational rehabilitation, social service agencies, employment services, the clergy, and in many instances, educational institutions.

Rehabilitation oriented agencies have at least five things in common. First, rehabilitation offers services that are "processes," as opposed to events. As an example, in the state Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, the process may include counseling and guidance, medical and psychiatric evaluation, treatment, job training, job placement, and job follow-up.

Second, rehabilitation services are highly individualized. Rehabilitation programs are designed by a counselor and a client to meet individual needs. Very few programs are exactly the same. If group services are offered, they are a part of a process, and again designed to meet individual needs.

Third, rehabilitation services are goal oriented. Most rehabilitation agencies have as their objective, employment for the individual client. Services which improve general health, enhance social functioning, or help people live happier lives are again part of the process leading to the objective of employment.
Fourth, rehabilitation services tend to be time oriented. Services have a beginning and an end. Clients come to an agency in need, and presumably, the agency through its specialized services, responds to that need. This process may range from a few days to many years. The process may be repeated for some clients, but it is generally not a life-time process.

Finally, rehabilitation services are adjunctive or co-operating services performed in concert with other community services. One agency usually assumes an over-riding responsibility, but the primary agency cannot do its job without other agencies’ efforts and support.

The setting in which the counselor finds himself is not necessarily the important factor. We may find the counselor in Vocational Rehabilitation Field Offices, Rehabilitation Facilities, Social Service Agencies, within the clergy, Employment Service and certainly within the educational systems. Perhaps some of our best “Counselors” are parents. The fact that we do have counselors in a variety of situations, is due largely to the emphasis and impetus provided by the Federal Government through the Social and Rehabilitation Service.

One activity of the Social and Rehabilitation Service was to sponsor a workshop on “Casework Standards for the Deaf” (1966) which brought together four general groups of counselors that serve deaf clients. The four groups are:

—General counselors who only rarely have deaf clients.

—Counselors who carry a substantial caseload of deaf clients in addition to a general caseload.

—Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD) who are professional specialists with the deaf.

—State Co-ordinators or Consultants or Specialists on rehabilitation of the deaf.

Possibly a fifth category would be that of the Counselor Aide for the deaf. Experience with a Counselor Aide for the past six months in Minnesota has demonstrated this person can be the proverbial extra arm of the professional counselor. There are countless ways in which an aide can be of assistance. Some tasks are:

—Handling intake procedures.

—Working with drop-in clients.

—General interpreting.

—Assisting with paper work and phone calls.
—Assisting in making client resume's.
—Arranging client housing.
—Providing follow-up services for clients in training.
—Providing follow-up services for clients on-the-job.
—“Teaching” grooming, interview procedures and techniques.
—Interpreting for employment tests.

There are probably thirty-five of our states which have sufficient deaf populations to require the services of at least one full time Rehabilitation Counselor or State Specialist for the Deaf.

Nebraska, as an example, is our nation's 35th largest state, with a population of 1,507,000. If we apply normally accepted percentages of hearing impairment to their population, we would have 1,507 (1/10 of 1%) profoundly deaf people and 45,210 (3%) hearing impaired persons. This population of deaf and hard of hearing would seem to warrant special attention.

In the majority of our states one Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf is not enough. Minnesota is our nation's 18th largest state and has three full time Specialists for the Deaf in Vocational Rehabilitation, one Consultant, one Counselor, and one Counselor Aide. In addition, two full time specialists are in a welfare setting. Additionally, the clergy is active with deaf people. With a population of over 3,600,000, all of these people are very busy and the need for additional staff is evident. It is vital that each state, or region, have sufficient personnel to work with deaf people effectively.

Caseloads must be of manageable size. If there are closure requirements, they must be commensurate with caseload size. Compensation must be made for several factors:

—It requires more time to work with deaf clients.
—Services for the deaf are very often long-term and intensive.
—The possible availability of Specialized Counseling and community service centers for the deaf must be assessed. Such special services, or the lack of them, will directly affect placement processes.
—Selective placement and careful follow-up services are more common to deaf caseloads than general caseloads.
—Special emphasis is required for deaf persons requiring mental health services.

—There are definite and identified needs for the multiple handicapped deaf over and above a "general deaf caseload."

—Vocational training programs for the deaf are limited, at the present time, to the post-school level.

Specialists for the Deaf do perform a variety of functions in addition to counseling, and this should be reflected in determining caseload size. Of particular note are the following "extra" duties:

—Participation in developing and maintaining sign language courses.

—Participation in developing and maintaining adult education courses.

Speaking assignments to various groups such as associations of the deaf, personnel manager associations, Mayor's Committees on Employment of the Handicapped, Rehabilitation Centers, new counselor orientation, and others.

—Participation on special study groups.

—Interpreting functions.

—Program development.

—Participation in Workshops, local, state, regional, and national.

—Participation in professional organizations.

—Administrative functions.

—Community involvement.

These functions are important. They all add to, and are a part of the rehabilitation and the placement process.

There are some definite qualities the Rehabilitation Counselor to the Deaf must have. Foremost is that he can communicate freely and effectively with his client. Communication must be expressive and receptive. To be effective in counseling communication must be dialogue and not monologue. He must also have conviction that deaf people have worth, confidence that deaf people are important and will give maximum effort, and common sense in recognizing that specialized placement work takes time and effort. This specialized place-
ment has rewards and failures since no client or job is perfect, and some give and take, on the part both of the employer and the client, will be necessary. Some additional traits an effective counselor should possess are innovation, flexibility, capacity for empathy and ability to work as part of a community team.

The placement process requires a definite body of knowledge. For purposes of placing deaf clients, all placement is selective placement. One of the major functions of effective placement is promoting a better understanding of deaf people among employers, the general public, other counselors and the deaf themselves.

The counselor particularly, and the client, must have knowledge of occupational information and knowledge of the world of work. In the broad sense this knowledge includes information about:

—Vocational fields and specific occupations within these fields.
—Occupational trends.
—Local employment possibilities.
—Specific job duties.
—Entrance level knowledge, skills and training.
—Physical demands.
—Environmental conditions surrounding particular occupations.
—Wages, hours and special requirements.
—Necessary tools and equipment.
—Nature of supervision.
—Special hiring requirements.
—Opportunities for advancement.

The counselor should also realize that jobs are not static. Jobs are not designed for deaf people, but if special considerations need to be made, these considerations are generally suitable for the non-disabled worker. Many counselors have their own employment files for companies that have deaf employees. Maintaining such a file on a current basis is extremely helpful in facilitating the placement process and avoiding a hit and miss approach to placing deaf clients.

Let us turn our attention briefly to the client. Dr. L.
Deno Reed (1967) in an earlier meeting here in Pittsburgh addressed himself to the topic, “What is Handicapping About Deafness?” He states in part:

“. . . . . it is most important to recognize that we are not working “with the deaf” but rather with “individuals who are deaf.” Deaf persons have many of the same social and psychological problems as hearing persons. However, such labels as “dependent,” “under-achieving,” “lacking in motivation,” “mentally ill,” and “oriented toward unrealistic life goals,” have been assigned to the deaf as a group when, in fact, these tags were inappropriate. Professional service depends on accurate, meaningful assessment of the individual, not on an acceptance of a stereotype.”

This statement is particularly true of occupational needs of the deaf client. If we are to meet the basic needs of deaf people, both hearing and deaf people, must adopt a positive, innovative attitude and approach toward the diffuse and individual abilities of deaf people, not the out-dated stereotypes.

There are several client factors which require emphasis. Foremost, is that deaf people need to know what a specific agency can and cannot do. The community at large, the deaf community, other professional agencies and lay people must know and accept the goals and objectives of specific agencies. Deaf clients tend to be result-oriented. If they understand an agency’s function, understanding will enhance the counseling relationship. Counselors and clients working together must understand who has responsibility for accomplishing each step in the placement process. We must avoid “knapsack counseling” - the transferring of all client responsibility to the counselor, which in turn creates dependency in the deaf person.

The report of the Middle State Institute on Vocational Rehabilitation of the Deaf, edited by Craig (1967), listed eight recommendations relative to rehabilitation of deaf persons. The first recommendation is:

“That rehabilitation counseling begin early in the school setting to assure systematic career planning, preparation, and placement.”

The placement function extends into and should begin in the school setting. Craig and Silver (1966) stated that better communication between employers and educators of the deaf might assist the deaf person in understanding his role as an employee, and the extra effort required to achieve it, through
preparation during the school years. Some of the things counselors can do in working with schools, both residential and day classes are:

—Provide meaningful information on graduates.
—Encourage formal, regular surveys of former students.
—Teach guidance courses to students.
—Maintain liaison with school administrators, academic faculty, houseparents, special staff, and especially vocational faculty.
—Participate in teacher workshops.
—Provide early individual student counseling. As a minimum this should include juniors and seniors.
—Purchase of hearing aids.
—Provide work-study programs.
—Provide special diagnostic information.

The past few years have witnessed counselors providing in-school rehabilitation center evaluations for students. This trend is highly meaningful. These programs are being conducted during the school year and in summer months between junior and senior years.

Clients come to rehabilitation agencies seeking employment assistance through several different channels. They are:

—From schools, as graduates or drop-outs.
—From “automated” industries.
—Clients seeking to upgrade themselves, usually financially.
—Clients who have been “fired” or dismissed for a variety of reasons.
—Clients generally dissatisfied with present employment.
—Clients seeking summer employment.
—Housewives wishing to re-enter the labor market.
—Peddlers who have decided to take regular employment.
—Transient workers from other states.
—Clients temporarily out of work because of strike, temporary reduction in employment.
—Inflexible deaf clients who refuse to change with changing work conditions.

—Companies that unionize and exclude deaf workers. These various referral resources yield a balanced caseload. Counselors who have all their clients in one status such as intake, training, or ready for placement, cannot be effective.

Clients in a balanced caseload in a rehabilitation agency will be involved generally in one of the following categories:

—Rehabilitation Center evaluation.

—Work adjustment or personal adjustment training.

—Vocational school training.

—Higher academic training.

—On-the-job training.

—Sheltered employment.

—Long term evaluation.

—Ready for employment.

—Not feasible for agency services.

The placement effort should be operative in process in all of the above categories. Even with these non-feasible clients the counselor can play a role in assisting with disposition by referral to the appropriate agency. New Social and Rehabilitation Service regulations should minimize the number of non-feasible clients served by state agencies.

Job development is an integral part of the placement process and should be operative at all times. Clients should not be in unrealistic vocational or college training programs. There must be a realistic vocational objective. Clients in evaluation programs should have a full rein of vocational exploration, and the final vocational objective must be realistic. At the present time, one of the best means of providing training in a realistic sense is through on-the-job training (O.J.T.). O. J. T.’s require close counselor-employer working relationships. Counselors should not, however, substitute O.J.T.’s for vocational school training if vocational training is the best resource to meet the client’s needs.

Stuckless (1967) has pointed out that “deafness itself does not preclude high levels of vocational attainment. There are very few professional classifications in which at least one deaf person cannot be identified.”
Research Briefs, August 15, 1967, Volume 1, Number 1, reviews a study by Crammatte (1967) which illustrates major characteristics of profoundly deaf persons in professional work who have met, and solved, problems on the job. Among other findings, this research points out that more than many others, deaf clients need special help in getting their first job. Troop (1966) has suggested three types of placement might be considered. These would include placement in a job commensurate with the client’s ability and training, placement in a job which offers advancement opportunities to jobs which will be commensurate with these abilities, and training and placement in “a job.”

If we are to have a model for placement of deaf clients so that larger numbers of deaf persons will be found in the professional classifications and the higher levels of work, we must insist on placement only in jobs commensurate with clients’ ability and training. This placement must not take place until the client is maximally trained according to his abilities. The word “job” has been described as “just one break.” Deaf people have had “breaks” in some areas of employment. The focus now is on “breaks” at the proper level of employment. We fully appreciate that many deaf workers have traditionally made a good employment record. We also recognize the changing economy and the changing character of vocations.

It seems unnecessary and unrealistic that we discard the large pool of jobs that deaf people themselves have established. As an example, deaf people are still entering the printing trades. The production control foreman of a major newspaper recently said that the changing face of printing will include deaf printers if they prepare for the future. Upholstery, welding, assembly, and punch press all continue to be good sources of employment. We can continue placement in the basic “pool of jobs,” but we must enlarge the basic pool of jobs by vigorous job development. John Sessions of the AFL-CIO labor movement indicates one approach by suggesting that we “buck the trends.” He has pointed out that two of the jobs in highest demand in our country today are blowing glass and shoeing horses.

An important factor in successful placement of the deaf client is the stability of the counselor. Placement requires time. A job contact made today may not “pay-off” for two years. The counselor who changes employment frequently does not have time to establish the necessary contacts.

The placement process requires a systematic approach. The counselor who is doing placement should establish a reg-
ular schedule for employer contacts. The best employer contacts are initially made in person. Subsequent contacts can be readily made by phone. Some counselors systematically call on different types and sizes of industry. If counselors have balanced caseloads, they will need balanced employer contacts as well. And the counselor must have someone to "sell" or place. It is self defeating to open up industry to deaf persons and have no deaf persons to place.

Five years ago we would have discussed in detail the steps a counselor should take in going to the interview with the client. This is not done a great deal today. Many personnel managers are sophisticated, sensitive people. They are looking for capable, independent employees. This is not the image presented when counselor and client appear hand in hand for an interview. There are some clients today, and there will be clients in the future, who will need this type of assistance. But this type of function should be employed only when absolutely necessary. With some clients a "watch-dog" type of placement is effective. The counselor calls ahead to the personnel manager and by phone makes necessary arrangements. The client need not always be aware of this type of plan.

Equally as great a challenge is encouraging the above average client to seek out the job that matches his abilities and potentials. This type of counseling, encouraging optimum job placement by the client, requires that the counselor be knowledgeable of employment opportunities at the professional, technical, managerial, and craftsman level - not just the skilled, semi-skilled and service areas.

We will continue to meet employers who are afraid of "deafness" for whatever reasons. Hopefully, it is a question of their not being "psychologically ready" today. All we can do is to continue with public information about deafness and re-contact these employers at a future date.

Follow-up to placement can spell the difference between success and failure. It has been pointed out that the day before a client begins a new job is the most critical time of employment. Follow-up techniques and procedures can vary drastically to meet the needs of the individuals. Job acceptance by some clients can very often be a life long process requiring semi-annual or annual inspection.

In summary, it can be said we have a number of employers like "Tut" and Univac that look favorably upon the deaf worker. We cannot be content with those companies we already know. We must continue to add to the known pool of companies that employ deaf persons.

It is suggested that placement is a process, not an event.
Placement is time oriented and highly individualized. Placement is a goal of rehabilitation agencies performed in concert with a variety of community agencies.

In the present year and years to follow, the placement process should be the responsibility of a counselor or the counselor should see that the responsibility is accepted by someone, either the client or another agency. The counselor must have many qualities. The most important of these would be adequate professional training and the ability to communicate in dialogue fashion at the level of the client. Effective use of Counselor Aides can enhance the placement process.

The placement function can be carried out in a variety of ways ranging from direct placement to a watch-dog type of function. Placement is a team effort and very often a community effort. Public information leading to understanding of deafness is vital in this process. Involvement on the part of the counselor, the client, the school, and those in industry and other community agencies is a part of a successful placement process. Perhaps the most exciting part of the placement process and the most rewarding is that of job development.

There are numerous problems that confront those persons involved in a placement process but these problem areas are being defined. We can now vigorously attack these problems to eliminate them if possible. There is no room for complacency in dealing with human beings and in doing the placement job.

Placement is difficult work. It is the culmination of the efforts of the many years of special education and of counseling processes. The goal is that of making the clients we have chosen to serve independent and proud citizens who are contributing members of society.

REFERENCES


AN EFFECTIVE PLACEMENT PROGRAM FOR DEAF CLIENTS


