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JOB AND CAREER REVIEW FOR THE DEAF EMPLOYEE

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Job and career review is suggestive of several areas of concern to persons working in rehabilitation fields with deaf clients. Some of these areas include underemployment (either known or suspected), effective follow-up on placement, appropriate initial job placement, and accurate definition and description of employment positions. Other areas might come readily to mind, but for the purpose of this brief paper, these areas appear timely.

Techniques and Procedures. Professional counselors working with deaf persons may find that all of their professional skills are called into play; however none of these skills will work unless there is effective communication between counselor and client. This point has been stressed and re-stressed recently, and probably needs no further elaboration at this point other than a listing of the various modes that must be used in order to meet the individual at the level he functions. These modes include carefully controlling speech to facilitate lipreading, using written language at appropriate levels for easy comprehension, employing formal and ideamatic sign language, mastering fingerspelling, and then combining these modes to communicate effectively.

Counseling. As professional counselors, you are aware of the psychological, social and medical basis for counseling, and its innumerable facets in interpersonal relationships. Theories sometimes prove to be unstable basis for counseling deaf persons, but where there is adequate communication and good old horse sense, the counselor should be able to ascertain the situation in which the client exists, the client's problems, his

needs or desires, and his attitudes toward himself. The principle here is that the counselor must fully understand the deaf client and the situation in which he lives. This is essential before effective help may be given.

Investigation. Before a counselor may get a client interested in a particular job or career, there must be considerable knowledge of the background data. This will include, among other things, talks with the client's present employer if he is employed, with school authorities if feasible, with the welfare caseworker if he is on welfare, and with the employment service to determine past efforts at job placement, if any. Always the counselor should ask "Why?" Why is the client unhappy? Why is he unemployed or underemployed?

Evaluation. There are a very few evaluation centers in the country capable of comprehensive evaluation of a deaf person; the chances are that the counselor will have to depend upon his own resources. The counselor who has had training in administration and interpretation of various psychological tests may wish to do the testing himself, but where good clinical services are available—where the psychologist is aware of the pitfalls inherent in testing language deficient deaf persons and can adequately communicate with the deaf—such services should be purchased.

There are mixed feelings with respect to the General Aptitude Test Battery as administered by state employment services. The verbal and numerical portions, and the scoring of the test, discriminate against those who are deficient in language. However, when the counselor is aware of these factors, the GATB proves to be a useful instrument when interpreted carefully. Its usefulness is extended by its coded relationship to hundreds of occupations listed in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT).

Thus, proper application of the GATB enables a counselor to determine the general levels between which the client may be able to function, and relate this to a broad range of occupations for which the client could be trained. It is unfortunate that the U. S. Employment Service keeps such a tight lid on this test battery; more general usage and experimentation by independent researchers might refine and develop it as a useful instrument in the testing of deaf people. One of its present drawbacks is that it "confirms what we already know" about the deaf person.

The client must be carefully guided to accept realistic goals once its aptitudes are determined. The knowledge of his own skills and limitations must be shared with him.

Jobs and Careers. What is available in the community?

The tremendous diversity of industry in the United States has created countless occupations. Many occupations are eliminated daily, and still others of entirely different nature are created. It is the counselor's responsibility to be able to help the client understand something of the nature of this rapid technological change, of the necessity for upgrading skills through training, and of selecting from occupations within his aptitude levels. And this interpretation must be presented to him at the level of his understanding; specifically, the level of language usage must be adjusted to the individual's language skills.

One of the more difficult tasks of the counselor is to survey the occupational picture of the community. He should go out and meet personnel managers, visit plants, and actually get a picture of what is going on. This is difficult because of the practical limitations of time and caseload paperwork; but it is important to be able to describe a general job or career, the working conditions of that job, and other factors to a client who is interested in making a career decision. The ideal caseload of deaf persons would permit the counselor sufficient time for essential field work so that effective and meaningful rehabilitation could be accomplished. The emphasis must always be on rehabilitation, not production of closures.

Other resources for job descriptions include career booklets such as those published by the New York Life Insurance Company several years ago. Concise descriptions tell what a job or career involves, what training is required, what salaries can be expected, and what kind of a person will fit the job. The State Employment Service publishes occupational outlook pamphlets and brochures which will assist the counselor in keeping him aware of job trends.

I would like to call attention to a segment of the deaf community that is frequently overlooked in our developing body of literature on deafness rehabilitation: those persons who suffered hearing loss in adulthood. Many have established jobs and community attachments. Their communication handicap is receptive rather than expressive. Often the real handicapping aspects of the disability do not hit them until they are displaced, or decide to change jobs for one reason or another; then they find that life is not quite so simple as it once seemed. Despite much publicity on the value of hiring the handicapped, employers are still reluctant. Frequently, these deafened adults find their social life slowly shrinking. They know little or nothing of the organized deaf community, and probably would not make an effort to join it even if they did since this would require further adjustments. Yet, the counselor should be aware of and alert to the advantages of a cer-

tain amount of mingling of these clients with other deaf people. These people frequently need social and adjustment rehabilitation quite as much as job placement.

This topic has only been approached from the most obvious directions and could be expanded very easily to book proportions. Perhaps an attack on some of these apparent problems will lead to more insightful services for deaf people.