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MEDIA UTILIZATION AND THE MULTI-HANDICAPPED DEAF

By ELLIE M. CARPER, Coordinator, Comprehensive Program for the Deaf, Hearing and Speech Center of Columbus and Central Ohio, Inc.

Before I begin speaking on my topic, I feel it is appropriate to acquaint you with our program of services and objectives.

The Comprehensive Program for the Deaf is a comprehensive pre-vocational program for multiple-handicapped hearing-impaired individuals and is an outgrowth of the former Project DEAF. In April 1971, Federal participation ended, but the Ohio Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Hearing and Speech Center of Columbus and Central Ohio entered into an agreement that would not only continue the initial impetus of Project DEAF but would expand the program of services to hearing-impaired persons qualifying for the program.

A great deal of community support is in evidence in the major changes within the structure of the program.

A. The physical facility has been provided through the purchase of a building by the Sertoma groups in the Columbus area.

B. Vocational try-outs to determine vocational feasibility and preference are conducted through cooperative agreements with competitive employers and vocational training centers. Such action has afforded a much broader spectrum of vocational exposure for our students, as well as acquainted the community with the problems of deafness. This has proven to be a vital asset in promoting and uniting other community service programs.

C. We can offer a very flexible and individualized program for each student, with objectives based on the particular needs of the individual. Due to the educational, social and occupational deprivation of the majority of our students, we are faced with seemingly insurmountable difficulties. We now offer full-time remedial education classes prior to vocational experience in order to prepare adequately the individual deaf person for the world of work.

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As part of my presentation, I feel it is quite appropriate to expound on the remedial education aspect of our program as well as the types of students that are enrolled in the program and their problems.

A typical referral to the program is an individual who has experienced 8 to 10 years in an educational system, who displays major adjustment difficulties, and whose verbal functioning may be below second grade level. Another example may be an individual who is completely devoid of any educational or social skills. And still another may be a person who may be functioning academically on a third grade level but has no knowledge of vocational goals, preference or terminology.

With students who are functioning on the illiterate level, we must *begin* to instill vocabulary concepts via picture-word relationships. With others we may need to develop language structure in order that they may be capable of following written instructions or completing a job application form.

Due to the fact that our students are dependent on visual modalities, we feel that media utilization is a primary means in providing as complete and effective remedial education and adjustment training as possible. Perhaps it would be more appropriate for me to discuss the *lack* of sufficient and applicable media for our Center. Being a rather new facility without access to adequate monies to purchase newly developed programmed learning devices, we have had to depend on transparencies developed by the program staff and utilize media distributed by Media Services and Captioned Films, such as the occupational adjustment loop films produced by the Oregon College of Education, film strips, and so forth. While the aforementioned materials are helpful, they are not adequate to meet the needs of our students. We often must resort to the "paper and pencil" method which also yields very little stimulation and comprehension. Available media to meet our special needs is extremely limited. There is no question but that we must begin to develop suitable material; i.e., in a recently distributed package of film strips containing 40 films, only parts of two were even remotely useful to students in a vocationally oriented program. One major problem is that the language may be applicable, but the pictures may be cartoonistic, thereby alienating the student and dampening his enthusiasm in applying himself. There is a continuing tremendous need for visual material that will instill vocabulary concepts and sentence structure.

Solutions to the media problems may be:

1. To establish a task force to evaluate available media;
2. To contact special programs that are designed to work with this particular disability group to determine the validity of their techniques;
3. Ultimately, to conduct a workshop where persons directly involved in the rehabilitation of multi-handicapped persons may "pool their knowledge" in order to determine appropriate curriculum and guidelines, as well as to make specific recommendations regarding needed media.

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Media development should not be limited to classroom use. We also recognize the need to develop media for parental counseling, to acquaint the community with the problems of deafness and the special learning needs of deaf persons who are not among the five percent bound for college. And lastly, media should be developed to educate the educators, the professionals who “don’t know they don’t know” the real needs of the deaf.

Sit back, become content, and we shall continue to repeat far too many years of superficial service. The time is *now* to open the doors for education and ultimate *real* rehabilitation for our “disadvantaged deaf”.