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Opening Remarks

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OPENING REMARKS

James R. Burress
Acting Commissioner
Rehabilitation Services Administration
Dept. Health, Education and Welfare

I am pleased to be with you at the NRA's First National Congress on Deafness Rehabilitation and for the unveiling of the Model State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation of Deaf Clients.

The process which led to this Congress and the Model Plan is an outstanding example of cooperation between the National Rehabilitation Association, and its Task Force on Deafness and such groups as the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, The Professional Rehabilitation Workers with the Adult Deaf, The Deafness Research & Training Center at New York University, and The Rehabilitation Services Administration.

The Model State Plan represents the best thinking of representatives of all these groups on how to improve and extend vocational rehabilitation services to the deaf. It comes at a time when we in RSA are placing our greatest emphasis on implementing the new Rehabilitation Act with its priority for the most severely handicapped. The Model State Plan goes far toward assuring that comprehensive and current guidelines on services to the deaf are available.

I can only marvel at the wisdom of Boyce Williams for gaining the cooperation of so many knowledgeable and committed people to help develop such a meaningful strategy for improving services. It is my hope that, as Jack Hutchison said to me in his invitation and as is suggested in the Communications chapter of the model plan, the cooperation and ongoing involvement of all the groups represented here today will continued to focus on developing the best possible plans for VR services in their own States.

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We have made tremendous strides in rehabilitation of the deaf in recent years. Even in RSA today we have two classes in manual communication underway in the Communicative Skills Program. Your efforts to highlight and give further impetus to the work of the NRA Task Force are indeed most worthwhile. I am pleased to be with you.