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Forum

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FORUM

ABOLISH THE RCD: AN OPINION

If the ADARA journal had an "opinion page", or "letters to the editor" section, I would direct my letter to that department as it is not based on any research but is purely opinion. (Incidentally, I think such a section would be a good addition to the journal.)

After nearly ten years experience in DVR it seems to me that the role of the counselor has become one of case record management. The case file has gained the status of having first priority and everything else follows in place. While there may be some DVR administrators who don't feel this is true or who don't see anything wrong with it, I think most RCD's will agree that it has a negative effect on the quality of service given the deaf client.

I occasionally hear or read that there should be established within DVR a branch for the deaf similar to that for the blind. I think that is a good idea if it could operate without the same regimentation that exists within the general agency. However, I doubt that many states would be willing or able to develop such a unit.

Perhaps a better idea would be to abandon the policy of having a RCD within DVR. Instead deaf clients would be served by a generalist who could use case service money to purchase specialized services such as counseling, interpreting, testing, placement, etc. This would mean that another agency, private or public, must be able to provide these services. Many states already have commissions or service bureaus for the deaf that could expand their programs to meet demand. People currently working as RCD's would have the option of applying for positions with the service providing agency, or becoming generalists with DVR.

The advantages I see to such a system are:

1. **A broader range of services.** The services provider could sell its services to agencies other than DVR. Agencies such as job services, social services, etc., generally do not hire specialists for the deaf, nor do they purchase services because they are often not available.

2. **More efficient use of time and money.** Under the present system a DVR agency hires a counselor with specialized skills, or tries to develop skills within its staff, then has that person spend most of his time working on case records. Some short term services such as purchase of a hearing aid, or interpreting for a job interview require a very lengthy and complex paper work procedure. What could be a simple and inexpensive service becomes very time consuming and expensive. (In addition to counselor time, is the time of the clerical workers, supervisors, managers, quality control, etc., etc., etc.)

3. **Better Quality Service.** The most important benefit of this kind of system would be the improved services for the deaf person. He would be served by personnel that give him first priority, instead of his case file. Staff could be hired and evaluated on their ability to do counseling, interpreting, placement, etc., instead of their ability to follow a procedural manual.

For such a system to be successful, DVR and other agencies would have to set aside money and be willing to pay for specialized services. There would also have to be a way to ensure that each deaf person had access to these services. I'm sure there are other problems that would need to be solved with this kind of system. However, I believe the situation, as is, needs change and this is one idea that should be considered.

Curt Seiders
Counselor for the Deaf
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

NOTE

The "Forum" is specifically intended to provide a 'platform' for opinion or letters to the Editor. It is used when/as the occasion warrants its use. We would hope that other readers may avail themselves of the opportunity to respond to Mr. Seiders, to make a commentary on the JRD or its contents, or to otherwise communicate via the "Forum".

Glenn T. Lloyd, Ed.D, Editor

FORUM

NEW NATIONAL CENTER ON EMPLOYMENT OF THE DEAF

The National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) has established the National Center on Employment of the Deaf — the first effort of its kind anywhere — to help advance the employment of qualified deaf persons nationwide, NTID Director William E. Castle announced today.

“This Center represents an exciting organizational effort, designed to blend the efforts of educators, rehabilitators, and employers to assist deaf people nationwide in reaching their career potential in the mainstream of the American workplace,” Dr. Castle said.

The National Center will serve as a national service agency and authority on the employment of deaf people in the U.S. Dr. Castle said the Center will be available to coordinate the development of national job opportunities in partnership with other postsecondary institutions, rehabilitation agencies, and employers and will provide placement assistance to those organizations by establishing a job bank for deaf persons nationwide, initially focusing on individuals who have postsecondary training.

The Center will also provide information related to employing deaf persons; will conduct active programs with employers on job analysis and job modification; and will train job placement professionals and employers who work with deaf persons.

NTID expects the first operational phase of the National Center to occur September 1979.

Dr. Castle pointed out that the new National Center on Employment of the Deaf is consistent with federal legislation passed recently by the 95th Congress amending the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The National Center for Employment of the Deaf is an important component of NTID Project Outreach, through which NTID shares its expertise with others to aid in the accommodation of deaf persons nationwide.

During its 10-year history, NTID has consistently achieved a 95 percent or higher placement rate for securing employment of its graduates. Dr. Castle notes that NTID has reversed the history of unemployment and underemployment of deaf persons; has become an international leader in the field of technical education for deaf people; and has worked professionally and cooperatively with leaders of business, industry, and government to dispel misconceptions about hiring deaf persons.

“We believe it is natural for NTID to extend this leadership role through the Center because of our national responsibility and the success we have achieved in placing our own graduates,” Dr. Castle explained. “Given this history of helping deaf persons to compete side-by-side with their hearing peers in the U.S. labor market, we think it’s both important and appropriate for NTID, in concert with other agencies, to take this bold and creative step to ensure that career opportunities for deaf persons will advance and endure.”

NTID is the only national technical college for deaf persons and the only place in the world where nearly 1,000 college-age deaf students attend school with hearing students to help their transitions into a hearing society. One of the nine colleges on the 1,300-acre campus of Rochester Institute of Technology, NTID was established by Congress in 1965 and is funded through the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.