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IMPROVING REHABILITATION SERVICE DELIVERY FOR SEVERELY HANDICAPPED DEAF PERSONS THROUGH RESEARCH UTILIZATION

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INTRODUCTION

Analysis has shown that rehabilitation research and practice with severely handicapped deaf persons have evolved through an extension of prior theory and practice within the field.

The thrust of this R & D strategy has evolved around the dimensions of population distribution, characteristics, service needs and the testing of rehabilitation program models.

These strategies can be conceptualized as promoting the improvement of rehabilitation service delivery through highly organized, well-staffed, regional, and national programs responsible for the interpretation-dissemination of research results with a planning-support function across all levels of rehabilitation programming for S-H deaf persons.

The utilization and application of this research involves certain basic assumptions:

1) Research & Demonstrations do not exist for themselves, but relate to operational definitions; to solve problems; to give some answers to the individuals and the problems of the individuals for whom we have a legal responsibility.

2) Results of rehabilitation research are both known and available, incorporating and mobilizing this knowledge to improve delivery of services.

3) Utilization of research results is not a static, but a dynamic process. When not effectively communicated, disseminated and read, research results can not significantly affect practice and development within the field.

4) The implicit goal of research utilization is to help the client, who as the consumer of rehabilitation services, is the target of research in the field. The purpose of research, particularly in utilization of research results is to improve the quality of change from the human point of view.

This panel on "Improving Rehabilitation Service Delivery for Severely Handicapped Deaf Persons Through Research Utilization" has been convened in anticipation of promoting a more systematic process of Research Utilization within the field of deafness rehabilitation.

The Research Utilization model to be proposed is a concept that provides a rationale for a model of data collection and utilization within the field. Evolving from a planning support function the basic assumption of the model is that "planning is a worthwhile endeavor, and, as such, data should be collected specifically to support it."

REHABILITATION SERVICE DELIVERY

Research in the general field of social services indicates that to effectively plan and provide basic services such as: counseling, information, referral, case-finding, and related case services: We require only the following *four* broad categories of data:

1) *Client Information* — Collected through the client case record provides information on: age, sex, race, hearing status, socio-economic level, presenting problem(s), and related variables. This data can be used to assist planners more accurately to predict needed expansion/modification of the delivery system to accommodate client needs.

2) *Service Information* — Where data analysis can identify trends in client intake, services requested, kinds of programs needed, and the identification of increasing or changing trends in the above.

3) *Resource Information* — Which categorizes programs, shows the geographic distribution of services in relation to known populations of deaf people, and the development of studies to determine service priorities/capacities and how they relate to gaps in and barriers to service.

4) *Survey Information* — Can be utilized to determine the impact of particular problems such as under-achievement, multiple-handicaps, minority status, poverty, and attitudes on the vocational adjustment/achievement of deaf people.

Working within this model of Research Utilization, the panel will briefly present overviews/syntheses of pertinent research with S-H deaf rehabilitation events. Discussion and questions from audience participants will be accepted following the panel presentations. The implications of Research Utilization for rehabilitation programming with severely handicapped deaf persons will then be summarized.