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COUNSELING THE SEVERELY HANDICAPPED DEAF PERSON

**ROGER REDDAN, Project Counselor, St. Paul TVI Program
for Deaf Students**

Introductory Remarks

Can anyone name ten counselors who are capable of offering quality services to severely handicapped deaf people? Can we, collectively, come up with a list of ten such counselors? How many of the people we might include are actually providing direct client services? Reflecting on these questions for a moment brings us to the realization that the counseling needs of severely handicapped deaf people are not being met. What can we do about it?

In the last five years, we have started to systematically apply accepted counseling theories to deafness. While this treatment of theory has been enlightening and productive, those of us working with deaf clients on a daily basis, want more than this. We need to go beyond the general framework of theories and define specific strategies and techniques which have proven to be successful in the counseling process. This is even more critical for those counselors working with severely handicapped deaf people.

Going back to my original questions, we all know our deficiencies as counselors. I am sure that very few, if any, of us would feel that our education is complete. Realizing this need for better counseling services, the PRWAD Board of Executives has authorized the formation of a Counseling Section. Dr. Alan Sussman and I have been appointed as Co-Chairmen to begin development of this section.

According to the PRWAD by-laws, the purposes of this section are: to facilitate the interchange of specialized ideas and concerns, to establish standards for Section Membership, to recommend guidelines for delivery of services, to aid in PRWAD membership recruitment and to disseminate information on matters of mutual concern. Within the framework of these purposes, the PRWAD Counseling Section should assume the leadership in an educational process which is long overdue.

This panel will address itself to strategies and techniques which some counselors have found to be effective in some situations with severely handicapped deaf people. We hope that the presentations and discussion will accomplish two major goals: 1) first of all, we want to come away from this meeting with some new techniques that we can each try in our particular counseling setting; 2) more important than this, however, we hope this section meeting will be the beginning of more intensive efforts in the field of deafness to upgrade counseling services for all deaf people. The newly authorized Counseling Section of PRWAD can hopefully provide the vehicle for achieving this second goal.