

## **A PROFILE OF THE MULTIPLY HAN- DICAPPED DEAF YOUNG ADULT**

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One of the most difficult groups of clients currently encountered by rehabilitation professionals is that of multiply handicapped deaf young adults. These persons are severely limited in their ability to meet the demands of daily living. They have not attained the minimal competence in social, academic, or vocational functioning to enable them to make a satisfactory life adjustment. Specific characteristics of multiply handicapped persons are: (1) Severely limited communication skills; (2) Low academic achievement levels; (3) Emotional immaturity; (4) Secondary disabilities; and, (5) Poor vocational preparation.

Multiply handicapped deaf persons may constitute as many as one half of the deaf population, or approximately 100,000 persons. Evidence available from several research and demonstration projects indicates that intensive, highly specialized, long-term habilitation-rehabilitation services are required by this group of deaf persons (See Bolton, 1971, for a review of the projects).

The purpose of this paper is to present a detailed description of the characteristics which define the multiply handicapped deaf young adults. The sample described is comprised of clients served at the Hot Springs Rehabilitation Center Project for Multiply Handicapped Deaf Persons (N 145). The description is divided into the following categories: demographic, developmental, family, parental, education, achievement, and vocational data.

### I. Demographic

1. Age: 16-20 ( % ), 21-25 (22%), 26+ ( % )
2. Sex: Male (72%)
3. Race: White (73%), Negro (21%), other (6%)
4. Onset of deafness: at birth (80%)
5. Marital Status: Single (100%)
6. Residence: Lives with parents (95%)

### II. Developmental

1. Walked at: 7-12 Mos. (43%), 13-18 (40%), 19+ (17%)
2. Rate of learning: Good (48%), Fair (39%), Poor (13%)
3. General disposition: Good (54%), Fair (27%), Poor (19%)
4. Relationship with mother: Good (84%), Fair (11%), Poor (5%)
5. Relationship with father: Good (77%), Fair (15%), Poor (8%)
6. Relationship with siblings: Good (79%), Fair (17%), Poor (4%)
7. Relationship with age mates: Good (74%), Fair (19%), Poor (7%)
8. Age began school: 3-5 years (27%), 6 years (40%), 7 years plus (33%)
9. Secondary disability: (34%)
10. Tertiary disability: (12%)

### III. Family

1. Behavior at home: Good (72%), Fair (25%), Poor (3%)
2. Helps with family work: (92%)
3. Cares for personal needs: (100%)
4. Can get around community alone: (92%)
5. Family residence: Owns home (70%)

### IV. Parental

1. Mother's attitude toward client: Accepting (91%), Rejecting (9%)
2. Father's attitude toward client: Accepting (83%), Rejecting (17%)
3. Father's occupation: Professional, technical, skilled (21%), semiskilled, unskilled (64%), unemployed (15%)

4. Mother's occupation: Professional, technical, skilled (8%), semiskilled, unskilled (29%), homemaker (61%), unemployed (2%)
5. Father's education: Did not complete high school (59%), high school graduate or more (41%)
6. Mother's education: Did not complete high school (62%), high school graduate (38%)
7. Father deaf: (4%)
8. Mother deaf: (4%)
9. Child grew up with both parents (81%)
10. Parents marital adjustment during child's development: Good (76%), Fair (14%), Poor (10%)
11. Ability of child to communicate with parents: Good (52%), Fair (40%), Poor (8%)
12. Parental cooperation with educational program: Supportive (60%), Neutral (31%), Detrimental (9%)

#### **V. Education**

1. School attended: State residential (80%), public-special classes (13%) other (7%)
2. Total years in school: 9 or more (78%), 13 or more (22%)
3. Termination status: Completed program (51%), voluntary dropout (18%), administrative discharge (31%)
4. Type of diploma: Academic (12%), vocational (19%), attendance (16%), none (53%)
5. Performance in terms of ability: Good (22%), Fair (57%), Poor (21%)
6. Motivation for learning: Good (23%), Fair (47%), Poor (30%)
7. Behavior in class: Good (42%), Fair (45%), Poor (13%)
8. Relationships with other students: Good (46%), Fair (43%), Poor (11%)
9. Relationships with staff: Good (50%), Fair (43%), Poor (7%)
10. Dormitory conduct: Good (44%), Fair (44%), Poor (12%)
11. Age at leaving school: 16 years plus (85%)

## VI. Achievement

1. WAIS Performance IQ: Below 80 (21%), 80-99 (43%), 100-120 (31%)
2. Academic skills: (Reading, language, and arithmetic) Median grade-level of third, with 10 percent at or above fifth grade.
3. Communication:
  - (a) Speech: Good (15%), Fair (7%), Poor (78%)
  - (b) Speech reading: Good (23%), Fair (12%), Poor (65%)
  - (c) Manual: Good (24%), Fair (48%), Poor (28%)
  - (d) General ability to express oneself: Good (24%), Fair (50%), Poor (26%)

## VII. Vocational

1. Previous work experience: 59% (only 33% held full-time jobs)
2. Previous training: (60%)
3. Previous DVR services: (48%)
4. Definite vocational goal: (35%)

The descriptive statistics outlined above thoroughly substantiate the five-part definition of the multiply handicapped deaf young adult:

1. Severely limited communication skills: reading and language abilities were equivalent to the average hearing third grader; the oral skills of more than two-thirds of the sample were rated poor; only one-fourth of the sample was rated as possessing good manual skills.
2. Low academic achievement levels: the average achievement level for this sample was third grade, with only one tenth at the fifth grade or above.
3. Emotional immaturity: almost all clients were dependent on their parents and lived at home; none were married; four-fifths of the sample had been sheltered at state residential schools where their overall performance and behavior was generally rated fair.
4. Secondary disabilities: fully one-third of the sample possessed secondary disabling conditions,

with one-eighth having tertiary disabilities. The most often occurring secondary disabilities were mental retardation, cerebral palsy, and visual defects.

5. Poor vocational adjustment: only one-third of the clients had held full-time jobs; only three-fifths had some kind of vocational training; one-third expressed a definite vocational goal.

In addition to the combination of deficits cited above, it is apparent from the parental data that the vast majority of clients comprising the sample came from lower-middle class environments. The consequent deprivation could only have further compounded problems resulting from early deafness. It is noteworthy, but not unusual, that almost all of the parents were hearing. A discussion of the problems that occurred in serving these clients is presented by Stewart (1971).

#### References

- Bolton, B. *Serving deaf clients in Arkansas: 1961-1971*. (Monograph) Fayetteville: Arkansas Rehabilitation Research and Training Center, 1971.
- Stewart, L. Problems of severely handicapped deaf: Implications for educational programs. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 1971, 116, 362-368.