

EDUCATION FOR MULTIPLY HANDICAPPED DEAF CHILDREN: INTRODUCTION

**GLENN T. LLOYD, Ed.D., Director of Research,
Deafness Research & Training Center, New York University**

While the focus of the Conference this week is on multiply handicapped deaf people and the major thrust is directed towards need, problems, and services of multiply handicapped deaf adults, we should bear in mind the fact that multiply handicapped deaf adults were once children. Perhaps the needs of the child population have been overlooked in the past or, possibly, they may not have been discussed as multiply handicapped deaf children. With the advent of more well prepared and knowledgeable vocational rehabilitation counseling personnel which has resulted in more and more deaf adults being discovered, in a sense, we have also become increasingly aware that we are attempting to serve deaf people who do have additional disabling conditions which lead to compounded handicaps.

It is never enough to think in terms of rehabilitation as a process to be reserved for people after they have achieved the age of 14 or 16 or whatever the minimum age for vocational rehabilitation services may be in a given state. We should recognize that the multiple handicap does not occur at the age of eligibility for services, but that it has, in all likelihood been present for a number of years prior to the age of eligibility. Whether the child receives appropriate educational services prior to his emergence as a vocational rehabilitation client may, in large part, determine how well he will be able to take advantage of the services available through vocational rehabilitation.

The panel today does not intend to address itself to programs and services of multiply handicapped deaf adults. Rather, it hopes to be able to share information related to the multiply handicapped population which has the disability of mental retardation in combination with serious hearing impairment. To this end, we shall present some general background information in terms of trends and then describe one comprehensive program for mentally retarded deaf children and their families.

We feel this approach is relevant to the general area of vocational rehabilitation services for multiply handicapped deaf people. The program which will be described may well serve as a model for other programs and serve to infer possible areas in which educational services and rehabilitation services might be cooperatively approached.