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THE DEAF-BLIND

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This section meeting regards one segment of the population of severely handicapped, that is, services for the deaf-blind client.

In providing educational services to handicapped children, we often hear a statement that, if you can adequately serve the deaf-blind child, you can adequately serve any handicapped child — the same is true in providing rehabilitation services — if we can adequately serve the deaf-blind rehabilitation client, we can adequately serve any multihandicapped deaf client. Vernon, 1973, reported that one-half of the deaf-blind population in this country is due to Usher's syndrome. Since the rubella epidemic of 1963-65, there have been approximately 5,000 deaf-blind children identified in this country. To bring this into focus, this averages out to 100 deaf-blind children per state. The only positive aspect of the situation is that we have a few years planning time before the majority of these children will be requiring our services. Hopefully, through meetings like this, we can establish realistic plans for programming for this population.

This afternoon we have three speakers on the program. Mr. Robert Dantona, National Coordinator for Services to Deaf-Blind Children, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D.C.; followed by Dr. Ed Hammer, Project Director, South Central Regional Center for Services to Deaf-Blind Children; and Mr. Lou Bettica, Assistant Director, National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults.

Following these presentations, there will be a panel to respond to questions from the audience. The panel is made up of the three presenters and three deaf-blind adults — Mr. Warren Wilson, Denver, Colorado; Dr. Robert Smithdas, National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults; and Mr. Kenneth Ferguson, Indianapolis, Indiana.