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SERVING THE MULTIPLY HANDICAPPED DEAF CLIENT IN A COMPREHENSIVE REHABILITATION CENTER

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My comments will be limited to a brief review of a special project conducted by the Arkansas R & T Center through the facilities of the Hot Springs Rehabilitation Center and a discussion of the implications of the results of this project for serving the multiply handicapped deaf client.

The project was conducted over a period of five years in the Hot Springs Rehabilitation Center. The Hot Springs Rehabilitation Center is a large comprehensive rehabilitation center providing a vast array of services for rehabilitating disabled clients. The Center maintains a population of approximately 400 clients at any given time, covering a wide range of disabilities.

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the effectiveness of a comprehensive rehabilitation center in serving the multiply handicapped deaf. (See Appendix A for a general description of the characteristics of a multiply handicapped deaf client, as defined for this project).

The following is a list of descriptive information of clients involved in this study.

A. Descriptive Information

1. Client data — two hundred (200) clients were served during a five year period which averaged thirty five (35) to forty (40) clients at a given time.

a. Clients had average intelligence and mobility.

b. Although most had 10-12 years of formal education, academic achievement was 3rd grade.

c. 30% had been previously discharged from residential or private schools for the deaf or from other rehabilitation facilities.

d. Clientele was predominately young (2/3 under the age of 21 years), male (2/3 of population served was male), white (2/3), and unmarried.

e. Speech and speech reading skills were poor, manual communication skills only fair.

f. One-half had previously received vocational rehabilitation services, and one-half had some previous work experience.

g. Only a small percentage (1/4) had begun school before the age of six.

All service programs provided through the Hot Springs Rehabilitation Center were utilized in providing rehabilitation services to clients in this project. The following is a list of services provided:

a. Vocational Evaluation — Vocational evaluation averaged thirty days of job sample testing, academic and psychological testing, training try-outs.

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b. **Work Adjustment** — Work adjustment was provided in a sheltered workshop setting. Behavior modification was the primary method of helping students acquire needed worker characteristics.

c. **Counseling** — Individual and group counseling were provided by special counselors who possessed the necessary counseling and communication skills.

d. **Vocational training** — Vocational training was provided by regular HSRC instructional staff with assistance of interpreters who served as instructor aides. Deaf students were in training along with hearing students. Training settings were as close to “real” work situations as possible.

e. **Personal Adjustment Training and Remedial Education** — This was provided by special project staff. Training encompassed daily living skills, vocational tutoring, and academics. Classes were small (2 to 4 students per class), highly individualized, and many special techniques were used for instruction (role playing for one). A media specialist was on the project staff to develop and acquire instructional materials.

f. **Driver Education** — This was a development of the last two years of the Project. Practically all deaf students received driver training and subsequently driver’s license before leaving HSRC.

g. **Independent Living Training** — This was one of the key components of the program. After extensive classroom training, students were placed in apartment living situations, where it was necessary for them to take care of their own needs (buying food, paying rent and utilities, housekeeping, banking, etc.) while continuing vocational training. Project staff supervised the independent living training program and were available to “bail-out” students when they encountered difficulties. This phase was very successful, and most students were capable of living on their own without assistance when they left HSRC.

h. **Recreation Therapy** — A special recreation therapist was at HSRC evenings and weekends to teach recreation activities which provided a recreational outlet for the young deaf adults.

The results of the project were as follows:

- a. 54% of students entering the project completed the training.
- b. Of the 54% completing — 60% were gainfully employed one year after leaving HSRC.
- c. Of the 46% leaving before completion of training — 40% were employed.
- d. The percentage completing programs is higher than for a general population of hearing students (54% of deaf completed as opposed to 45% of other completed).
- e. Despite efforts to the contrary, students tended to group in four or five vocational training areas (printing, laundry, dry-cleaning, upholstery).
- f. The majority of students were referred from Arkansas and surrounding states.
- g. It was necessary to do extensive staff training — qualified staff with indepth experience were difficult to attract.
- h. Deaf students required 50% longer to complete programs than hearing students — they required intensive tutoring, adjustment services, and independent living training not required by hearing students.
- i. As a result of “h”, the program was more expensive for the deaf students.
- j. Project clients who were older and had previous work experience were more successful in completing programs than younger, inexperienced clients.

Implications gained from this project for serving the multiply handicapped deaf are as follows:

1. Placement of services within a larger comprehensive type facility permits a variety of rehabilitation services within one setting with greater continuity and efficiency.
 - a. Dorm facilities are an essential part of the rehabilitation services, as close supervision is often necessary for the multiply handicapped deaf.

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b. A large, comprehensive facility makes an evening recreation schedule possible, which permits deaf students to develop positive outlets of a recreational nature.

2. A wide range of vocational training opportunities is necessary if clustering students into stereotyped "deaf" training areas is to be avoided.

3. Integrated facility setting brings the deaf client into daily contact with hearing people, providing the opportunity for easing adjustment to eventual work environment.

4. The tendency for the immediate surrounding states to refer the majority of clients to Hot Springs gives support to the regional rehabilitation facility for the deaf idea.

5. Finding and keeping qualified special staff is difficult. Facilities contemplating a special program for the deaf should be prepared to deal with this problem.

6. Many rehabilitation facilities tend to concentrate upon vocational training and physical restoration, with adjustment services secondary. With multiply handicapped deaf students this may be impossible if effective services are to be provided as extensive adjustment services are frequently required before a vocational training can be begun.

7. The rehabilitation facility must be willing to work with a range of behavior problems exhibited by the severely handicapped deaf client.

8. If a meaningful service program is provided by competent staff, the success percentage can be expected to be higher than for the general rehabilitation facility population.

9. The project was not able to provide follow-along services or community service programs after the students left HSRC. This is a vital need, and draws attention in efforts to serve this population.

In summary, this project clearly demonstrated that the services within a comprehensive rehabilitation center can be effectively utilized in the rehabilitation of many multiply handicapped deaf. The key to utilizing Center services for serving the deaf is an administration that is flexible and innovative and adequate trained personnel in understanding and communicating with deaf clients.

A copy of the final report may be obtained by writing to:

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