

SERVICES FOR DEAF ADULTS AT HOT SPRINGS REHABILITATION CENTER

GARY D. BLAKE

The Hot Springs Rehabilitation Center (HSRC) has been developing and providing effective services to deaf adults for approximately five years.* During the period January, 1964, to June, 1968, approximately 180 deaf persons between ages 16 and 60 enrolled for Center services. During most of this period, the number of deaf students enrolled at any one time ranged 25 to 42. In recent months the weekly enrollment of deaf students has fluctuated between 35 and 40 persons.

The majority of deaf persons referred to and enrolled in the program have been young males (average age 21), possess average intellectual levels, terminated their school programs at state residential schools for the deaf, have had little or no competitive work experience, enroll for Center services within three years of leaving school, depend upon the language of signs as their most effective mode of communication, handle the English language at a level of approximately grade four, and have completed twelve or more years of formal schooling. Nearly one-half of the students served were classified as completing school programs. The majority of them do not have an automobile driver's license. For about 50 percent of those enrolling, deafness is regarded as the major handicap—but most of these can be classified as multiply handicapped due to their low reading levels, their severely restricted expressive language ability, their limited knowledge of the world about them, and their social vocational inadequacies. The major handicap for approxi-

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mately 20 percent of the deaf students served is described as serious adjustment difficulties evidenced by emotional instability or gross immaturity; 12 percent have been either totally or greatly deprived educationally and enroll with little or no academic knowledge and with no communication abilities beyond natural gestures. Twelve percent have serious physical difficulties in addition to deafness such as cerebral palsy, polio residuals, diabetes, epilepsy, visual difficulties, paraplegia, and quadraplegia. The remaining 6 percent appeared to be handicapped with a neurosis or psychosis.

All of the established Center services are available to deaf students. Social, medical, vocational and psychological evaluation is provided. Medical services including medical dormitory housing, numerous "clinics" include prosthetic and orthotic clinics, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and audiological screening. Psycho-social services include individual and group counseling, supervised recreation programs, religious activities and dormitory supervision. Special education instruction oriented to the needs of this group and vocational skill training in twenty-three vocational areas are available.

Full time professionals, trained and experienced in serving deaf persons, are employed on the HSRC staff, and additional services have been established to meet the special and unique needs of deaf students enrolling at the Center. These services are discussion seminars, vocational tutoring, communication services and interpreting. The seminar sessions are conducted with homogenous groups of 6 to 10 deaf students, and topics of daily living and orientation to employment are discussed. The methodology includes the use of specially prepared curriculum outlines, visual aids, role playing, guest discussion leaders from local businesses and service agencies, and field trips. Lively participation by the students is a goal of these sessions. Topics are experiential and practical in nature. They include how to fill in job application forms, how to apply for a job, payroll deductions, banking services, use of community service agencies, finding a job, locating housing, etc. Vocational tutoring is conducted by a trained instructor of the deaf, as are the seminar sessions. Tutoring supplements instruction given by the vocational instructor and assures that the deaf student knows the names of the tools, equipment, materials and jargon of the vocation for which he is being trained. On occasion, the vocational instructor will experience communication difficulties with imparting knowledge to the deaf student and the tutor stands ready to assist. Communication services include such items as interpreting letters from home,

writing letters, and assisting with necessary telephone calls. The student is encouraged to be as independent as possible; communication services are provided only if absolutely necessary. Interpreting services are used sparingly. All staff members who work intimately and regularly with deaf students receive instruction in the language of signs. Interpreting services are offered primarily "on call." Center staff trained to work with the deaf have been called upon to interpret on occasion for vocational instructors, medical staff and consultants, student body government meetings and all student body assemblies. While special education, individual and group counseling, and vocational evaluation services are "regular" Center services, they are provided to deaf students by the staff professionals who are trained to work with them.

Deaf students are integrated into the Center milieu. They share dormitory rooms with hearing students, study and work alongside hearing students in the vocational training areas and participate in the Center recreational activities. Deaf students participate in all student body assemblies, with the assistance of a staff interpreter.

The vocational training areas which have enrolled deaf students are: Offset Printing, Laundry and Dry Cleaning, Body and Fender, Business Education, IBM Key punch Machine Operating, Drapery and Slipcovers, Dressmaking, Upholstery, Meatcutting, Drafting, Food Service, General Mechanics, Custodial, Woodworking, Watchmaking and Auto Mechanics. This list represents about one-half of the training courses available at HSRC. A review of this list reveals that most of the deaf students are trained in vocational areas in which knowledge and skill can be imparted primarily through demonstration rather than lecture or other academic study methods.

The current number of personnel working full-time with deaf students totals six. These include a coordinator, a counselor, a vocational evaluator, a language arts instructor (to provide special education, vocational tutoring and to conduct discussion seminars), a counselor-aide, and a secretary. It should be emphasized that all Center staff members work with deaf students assigned to their areas of service: medical personnel, evaluation department staff, vocational instructors, dormitory supervisors, etc. The program for the deaf will be upgraded and expanded in the immediate future in an effort to further investigate the needs of the deaf and to develop an effective comprehensive rehabilitation program for multiply handicapped deaf adults. This study will be supported in part with a grant from Rehabilitation Services Administration.

Deaf adults from any section of the United States are considered

for enrollment, but must be referred by a state rehabilitation agency counselor. All inquiries should be directed to the Hot Springs Rehabilitation Center Admissions Committee, P. O. Box 1358, Hot Springs, Arkansas 71901.