

## DELIVERY OF VOCATIONAL EVALUATION SERVICES TO DEAF PERSONS: RESULTS OF A NATIONAL SURVEY

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**Abstract**

Vocational evaluation services are important components in the rehabilitation process, but pose special problems for hearing-impaired persons. Due to their unique communication requirements, additional knowledge and skills are required on the part of professionals providing services to this population. Thousands of rehabilitation facilities exist across the United States, many of them offering vocational evaluations as well as a variety of other services to these individuals. Until a national survey of rehabilitation facilities was conducted by the Arkansas Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Deafness and Hearing Impairment there was no organized body of information describing the availability of specialized rehabilitation services needed by hearing-impaired persons. This survey contacted over 4,000 rehabilitation facilities nationally with 221 of those facilities offering some combination of specialized services to deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. This paper will focus on those items dealing with the provision of vocational evaluation, and adjustment services to this population.

**Rationale and Overview**

Assessment and adjustment services, in all of their various forms, represent a major component of the vocational rehabilitation process (Bolton, 1982). The primary purveyor of these and other related services is the vocational rehabilitation facility. These facilities work with wide varieties of disability groups and offer a considerable number of different services to these individuals (Czerlinsky & Gilbertson, 1985). One such population consists of persons with impaired hearing. There are significant variations in how these facilities choose to offer evaluation and adjustment service to their hearing-impaired clientele. This is true both in terms of variety of services as well as number and kinds of staff available to serve this client group. This is particularly true with regard to staff skilled in use of the communication modalities used by such persons. Additionally, while some sectors of the country have many high quality evaluation and adjustment services, others are lacking same.

Until recently, deaf individuals, their families and rehabilitation personnel in the various states frequently discovered an absence of any kind of directory or related descriptions of the scope and location of the facilities which were needed when seeking specific combinations of services. Too often this resulted in inappropriate, or even no services being provided to a deaf person needing evaluation and/or adjustment programming. This was frequently the case even though there were and continue to be a number of highly qualified and effective programs available to these persons.

During 1982 and 1983, the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Deafness and Hearing Impairment (RT-31) conducted a national survey of programs offering vocational evaluation and/or adjustment services. Over 4,000 facilities were surveyed with 221 respondents meeting the survey criteria. That criteria being, offering one or both of the above listed services in some capacity and serving 10 or more deaf persons annually.

The initial product resulting from this effort was a 1985 publication entitled The National Directory of Rehabilitation Facilities Offering Vocational Evaluation and Adjustment Training to Hearing-Impaired Persons (Marut et al., 1985). The second objective, currently in progress, is to analyze the availability and patterns of services being provided to deaf rehabilitation clients across the country. This paper will give a general overview of the survey results from a national perspective. A more detailed report regarding the survey results will be available from RT-31 by Autumn 1986.

### Results

The 221 facilities meeting the previously described criteria were fairly evenly distributed across the 10 Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Regions. Table I provides a breakdown of number of facilities by region. Of the 50 states and District of Columbia, four states had no facilities represented in the study (Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, and South Dakota). This is not to say that no facilities responded from these states nor that they do not offer services to deaf persons, but that no respondents met survey criteria.

**Table I**  
Number & Percent of Programs  
by RSA Region

Region	# of Programs	% of Programs
1	13	5.8
2	25	11.3
3	22	9.9
4	36	16.2
5	44	19.9
6	25	11.3
7	12	5.4
8	13	5.8
9	20	9.0
10	11	5.9

When asked to describe themselves, the largest number of programs identified themselves as vocationally oriented. About one third of the 214 programs answering the question requesting program type described themselves as comprehensive rehabilitation center, usually with a sheltered workshop. The next most likely

description was by center which described themselves as prevocational and/or work activity centers. Various types of medically oriented or educational programs make up the remainder of the facilities responding to this question. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the types of programs by number and percent. The figures are based on 214 respondents with some checking more than one descriptor.

**Table II**  
Number and Percent of Programs by Type

	N	%
All Programs	214	—
Comprehensive	67	31.3
Prevocational	45	21.0
Sheltered Workshop	67	31.3
Work Activity Center	47	21.9
Vocational Evaluation Center	20	9.3
Speech/Hearing Center	31	14.4
Hospital	21	9.8
Postsecondary Program	25	11.7
Secondary School	24	11.2
Other	85	39.7
7 programs did not respond		

Table 3 provides an itemization of various kinds of evaluation and adjustment related services offered and the average number of deaf persons receiving these services annually per program. The 127 facilities reporting the provision of vocational evaluations served an average of 25 deaf people each and an average of 61 deaf persons received personal social adjustment services in each of the 132 facilities. Typically, the average number of deaf persons receiving each of these services annually ranges from about 25 up to almost 60.

**Table III**  
**Number and Percent Programs Offering Service and Average Number of Deaf Persons Receiving Service in 1982 - Nationally**

Service	% Programs Offering Service		Av. # Deaf Persons Receiving Service
	N	%	
Vocational Evaluation	127	61.7	25.0
Psychological Evaluation	94	45.8	34.0
Personal-Social Adjustment	132	65.0	61.6
Work Adjustment	117	57.3	25.4
Independent Living Skills	100	49.2	58.6
Career Education	77	37.9	32.7
Adult Education	70	34.3	21.3
Vocational Trade Training	77	37.9	19.1
Job Seeking Skills	124	60.7	48.1
Job Placement	114	55.8	29.6
Sheltered Workshop	75	36.9	6.1

Obviously, a wide variety of professionals are necessary to provide these services regardless of the disability group or groups served. In addition to being well trained in their respective disciplines, staff working with a deaf clientele ideally need to demonstrate competency in manual communication skills. American Sign Language requires the equivalent amount of time and effort to master as would any foreign language. Finding persons possessing these dual qualifications is difficult and in many instances interpreters are hired in lieu of requiring professional staff to learn sign language. Table 4 presents breakdown of number of staff available in a variety

of positions and the average number and percent of staff with degrees in a deafness related field. The figures represent the number of paid staff in each position and decimals reflect part time positions.

**Table IV**  
**Reported Average Number of Each Type of Staff and Staff With Degrees in Deafness Nationally in 1982**

Staff	Average # Staff	Average # Degree in Deafness	Average % Degree in Deafness
Counselor	2.4	.3	23.4
Case manager	1.7	.1	12.1
Social worker	1.0	.08	13.0
Psychologist	1.0	.05	8.6
Vocational Evaluator	1.2	.07	9.6
Career Educator	.55	.03	15.1
Adult Educator	.6	.2	21.1
Work Adjust. Specialist	1.0	.05	10.2
Job Placement Specialist	1.0	.1	14.7
Production Supervisor	1.3	.01	5.0

#### Summary

Previous to 1982 the field of deafness rehabilitation had no organized resources available to help professionals, deaf individuals and their families locate services outside of their immediate geographic locality. Nor has there been any study addressing rehabilitation programs serving deaf persons on a national level. As a result of this survey the Research and Training Center on Deafness published the National Directory of Rehabilitation Facilities offering Vocational Evaluation and Adjustment Training To Hearing-Impaired Persons in 1985. This publication is the first such document outlining the availability of services to this population on a national basis.

The survey of more than 4,000 rehabilitation facilities identified 221 programs serving deaf persons. There were some variations noted as to the geographic distribution, though all RSA regions had some programming available. The larger variations occurred in the kinds of services available within these programs. Some programs only offered a few services while others provided clients a full range of rehabilitation services. Additionally, the number of staff qualified to serve this population was less than would be needed to serve the numbers of persons receiving the corresponding services.

Additional analyses of these and additional issues are currently being conducted by RT-31. The above overview should serve as a basic introduction to the larger report (Delivery of Vocational Evaluation Services to Deaf Persons: Results of National Survey) which will be available by Autumn of this year.

#### References

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