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## AN ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYMENT SEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND PLACEMENT STRATEGIES CURRENTLY EMPLOYED WITH HEARING IMPAIRED PERSONS IN THE UNITED STATES.

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*The average worker under thirty-five years of age goes about the job hunt once every one-and-a-half years; the average worker over thirty-five, once every three years (Bolles, 1977, preface)*

### Introduction

Job-seeking, placement, and employment retention have been viewed from various perspectives by those who have contributed to the rehabilitation literature. Most often, these procedures are considered to be means to the end of competitive employment, the fundamental goal of the vocational rehabilitation process (Bolton, 1981; McClure, 1972). Yet, job finding, placement, and retention efforts are still considered to be more of an art than a science (Arzin & Besalel, 1980), often relying heavily on trial and error approaches (Zadny & James, 1977 a). It is these processes and their current application by rehabilitation professionals in meeting the placement needs of hearing-impaired clients which are the focus of this investigation.

### JOB PLACEMENT:

#### Where we have been: a literature review

While much has been said and written about the progress and techniques of job placement among disabled populations, there appears to be no single right way to do it (Minton, 1977; Salomone & Usdane, 1977). Many authors concur that job seeking, placement, and retention strategies fall along a continuum: from the client locating and maintaining employment alone with no counselor assistance to the counselor assuming all responsibility for job development, placement, and follow-up (Matkin,

1982; Minton, 1977; Salomone & Usdane, 1977 a). Others (Geust & Calzaretta, 1982; Maguran, 1974; Vandergoot & Swirsky, 1980) espouse a systems approach to placement. The various systems models entail a holistic appraisal of all the subsystems (e.g., client, employer, and rehabilitation agency) which interact and subsequently impact upon the placement process.

Regardless of the placement philosophy adopted or the practices employed, the role of the rehabilitation counselor/specialist is frequently central to the process. In light of current economic, social, and political trends, Geist and Calzaretta (1982) predict that there will be a greater necessity in the future to have placement counselors help disabled persons find jobs than has existed previously.

For the hearing-impaired job seeker, language, communication, and lack of sophistication in job-seeking skills often present obstacles to a successful job search (Lauritsen, 1972). These same barriers may lead to an over-dependence on the vocational rehabilitation counselor for placement (Casella, 1978). In 1966, Troop noted that vocational rehabilitation efforts toward placement of hearing-impaired clients were at an inadequate level of development, grossly understaffed, and often failed to do justice to the client. Further, as many as 70% of hearing-impaired clients in

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the United States may be served by general counselors (Tully, 1970) most of whom have a heavy caseload of hearing clients, a myriad of case management responsibilities, and not enough time or training to work extensively with hearing-impaired applicants on job-seeking activities (Casella, 1978; Usdane, 1976; Zadny & James, 1977a, 1979). The current state of affairs is compounded by findings which reveal that, while unemployment among deaf hearing-impaired persons is on the increase (Vernon & Hyatt, 1981), only six to ten percent of a state vocational rehabilitation counselor's work week is devoted to placement (Tully, 1970; Zadny & James, 1977b, 1979). Thus, despite the belief that the more traditional methods of selective placement may be the ultimate professional service desired by a client (McDonald, 1974), these circumstances do not bode well for the hearing-impaired applicant who relies solely on the rehabilitation counselor to procure employment for him.

Confronting many of the same problems among their general caseload clients, rehabilitation counselors have developed new programming to facilitate the rapid replacement of job-ready clients (Fraser, 1978). A relatively recent placement innovation, the self-directed job search, has the potential to significantly augment conventional placement procedures (U.S. D.O.L. Report, 1981). Teaching clients job-seeking skills individually or in a classroom atmosphere and establishing job clubs which provide support to clients as they implement their job searches are two of the most popular self-directed job search strategies.

In reference to self-directed efforts among deaf clients, Pettingill (1966) noted that, while there are no magical formulas for placement of a hearing-impaired client, he believed in "making the client look for his own employment wherever possible, and especially after a series of counseling sessions on how to go about it (p. 99). Maguran (1974) has similarly recommended a multi-dimensional approach to job-seeking and development:

*First, agency or institution job-seeking and placement methods for their clients.*

*Second, the individual deaf person's ability to seek out the appropriate career (p. 38).*

Bolton (1975) suggests four phases of job placement services for hearing-impaired clients including educating potential employers, preparing the client to present himself in a positive manner to an employer, placement assistance, and an on-going follow-up program. Speaking from an employer's perspective, Silver (1974) emphasized the importance of counseling in alleviating work adjustment problems among hearing-impaired workers once employment is secured. Finally, in considering multiply disabled hearing-impaired clients, Gonzales (1969) recognized that some clients will have to be led by the hand through the entire process of solicitation and placement.

It is apparent from a review of the literature that the full gamut of placement services from counselor-directed selective placement and follow-up to a more client-centered self-directed search approach may be recommended for a hearing-impaired client population. Further, while traditional selective placement strategies are in common use with hearing-impaired clients, many of the innovative placement practices cited in the general rehabilitation literature are also being employed by specialists working with the hearing-impaired population. In an effort to assess the current state of the art in employment search, development, and placement with hearing-impaired clients, the University of Arkansas Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Deafness and Hearing-Impairment conducted a national survey of placement strategies. The purpose of this article is to share the results of this survey and to recommend future directions for applied research related to the placement process with a hearing-impaired client population.

#### **Method**

A 40-item questionnaire was constructed to assess employment search, development, placement, and follow-up strategies employed by the various programs surveyed. The questionnaire consisted of three major sections: client development and selective client place-

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ment strategies questions and employer/client follow-up services questions. The questions in the first section of this questionnaire focused on client development and self-directed search techniques and were constructed to include items related to procedures and practice described in the current literature on placement techniques (Azrin & Besalel, 1980; Hodgson, n.d.; Reller, 1976; Walker, 1978; Ralls, 1980; and Veatch, 1982). Questions in the second and third parts of the instrument reflect the use of counselor-directed job development techniques, selective client placement practices, and follow-up services. These were drawn from recommended practices noted in a review of the rehabilitation literature on selective placement and follow-up techniques (Baxter, 1979; Geist & Calzaretta, 1982; Gonzales, 1969; McDonald, 1974; Macguran, 1974; Matkin, 1982; Minton, 1977; Molinaro, 1977; Pati & Atkinson, 1981; Shrey, 1976; Sinick, 1977, 1979; Usdane, 1976; Zadny & James, 1977).

Further, each section contained an open-ended question which allowed respondents to further detail additional strategies employed and to make comments.

A sample of 236 programs serving hearing-impaired persons was selected to receive the questionnaire. The sample included 68 residential schools with high school programs, 77 postsecondary programs, and 91 rehabilitation or community service programs which serve the hearing-impaired population. Programs included in the sample were drawn from the April 1982 directory issue of the *American Annals of the Deaf*.

**TABLE 1**  
Survey Response Rates by Agency Types

Agency type	#	Form		Response Rate
		Received	Form not Received	
Residential Schools	68	59	9	.87
Postsecondary Programs	77	56	21	.72
Rehab./Comm. Serv. Programs	91	67	24	.74
<b>Totals</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>.77</b>

The overall response rate to the mailing was 77%. A total of 182 completed questionnaires

was received. Table 1 indicates response rates by type of agency sampled.

### Results

Table 2 presents information regarding the types of self-directed search techniques which are currently being taught to hearing-impaired persons.

**TABLE 2**  
Self-Directed Search Strategies Taught by Responding Programs

Question* Number	Strategy	% agencies using strategy
1	Locating formal job leads	79
2	Locating informal job leads	76
3	Contacting employers in person	71
4	Contacting employers by letter	52
5	Contacting employers by phone	41
6	Resume development	71
7	Completing application forms	77
8	Interviewing techniques	79
9	Employer follow-up procedures	62
10	Employment orientation skills	59
11	On-the-job behaviors	74

\*Section I of the questionnaire

From this table, it can be noted that most of the responding programs provide clients with basic instruction in job search techniques, resumé development and application completion, and appropriate job behaviors. The only skill which was not addressed by a majority of respondents was contacting potential employers by telephone. A total of 84% of the agencies employed one or more of these instructional techniques.

Both group and individualized instruction were cited as instructional formats employed to instruct clients in self-directed search techniques.

An individualized format was employed by 76% of the respondents while 71% used group instruction. When asked to state their preference for instructional format, 44% of the respondents preferred a group format.

Table 3 summarizes the type of instructional methodologies employed by the respondents.

The largest number of responding programs (81%) employed a lecture format to communicate job-related skills to their hearing-impaired clients. Of the total respondents, 29%

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reported the use of additional job seeking strategies not listed on the survey questionnaire and/or the type of client for which a particular instruction approach might be most useful.

**TABLE 3**

Type of Instructional Methodologies Used	
Instructional methodology	% reporting use
lecture	81
guest speakers	63
video tape	57
field trips	56
other	54
books	47
films	41

The respondents also offered information regarding film and book titles, additional strategies employed, and general comments. These responses provide valuable information and practical insights into the task of providing clients with instruction in self-directed search techniques. Although too lengthy to incorporate herein, this information is available upon request from the Arkansas Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on deafness and Hearing-Impairment.

Turning to an analysis of job development and selective client placement techniques, Table 4 provides information regarding the use of these counselor/teacher-directed approaches.

**TABLE 4**

**Job Development and Selective Client Placement Techniques Employed By Respondents**

Question* number	Strategy	Percent using
1	Agency outreach to employers	70
2	Job solicitation	61
3	Job analyses by agency	53
4	Job restructuring advice	69
5	Requesting waivers or modifications of educational testing standards	42
6	On-the-job training arrangements	60
7	Job try-out or trial appointments	53
8	Job coaching support	61
9	Providing job-client matching	56
10	Develop cooperative work experience/study sites	47

\*Section II of the questionnaire

A total of 27% of the respondents reported using additional job development/selective placement strategies. One-fourth of the respondents made comments regarding the strategies listed in Part II of the questionnaire and/or the type of hearing-impaired client for whom these services might be most needed.

Finally, in terms of employer/client follow-up services, 49% of the responding agencies/institutions reported that they provide routine follow-up counseling or support to their clients. Of those respondent agencies which do not provide routine follow-up services, over half (55%) indicated that the services would be available "upon request by the client". Routine follow-up services are provided to employers by 42% of the responding agencies. Of those agencies not offering a routine follow-up program to employers, 60% noted that follow-up support would be available upon employer request. A total of 24% of the respondents provided comments on the use of follow-up services and/or the type of client for which these services might be most needed.

In addition to the descriptive analyses, a statistical analysis was performed to assess the use of employment strategies and services provided as analyzed by type of respondent agency. Table 5 presents statistically significant ( $p = .05$ ) differences between residential, postsecondary, and rehabilitation/community service programs with regard to types of placement strategies and instructional formats employed.

Focusing first on self-directed search strategies, a significantly greater number of postsecondary programs teach students how to compose and distribute cover letters of introduction to prospective employers. A significantly greater percentage of residential high school programs and significantly fewer postsecondary programs instruct students in employer practices such as union membership, employee benefits, and common paycheck deductions. Of those agencies/institutions reporting the use of instruction in self-directed search techniques, significantly fewer rehabilitation facilities made use of group instruction and a lecture format while

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TABLE 5

**Statistically Significant Differences Between Residential Schools, Postsecondary Programs and Rehabilitation/Community Service Programs with Regard to Instructional Methods and Placement Strategies Used with Hearing-Impaired Clients**

Strategy	Residential Schools		Postsecondary Programs		Rehabilitation/Comm. Service Programs		Chi Square	p =
	% Using		% Using		% Using			
	N		N		N			
<b>I. Self-Directed Search Instruction</b>								
a. Contacting employers by letter	59	45.8	56	67.9	66	45.4	7.68	< .05
b. Teaching employment orientation skills	58	77.6	57	40.4	66	60.6	16.59	< .001
<b>II. Instructional Techniques</b>								
a. Use of group format	49	98.0	48	93.89	56	64.3	27.49	< .001
b. Preference for individualized instruction	37	43.2	33	27.3	31	61.3	7.53	< .05
c. Preference for group instruction	37	56.8	31	77.4	31	38.7	9.53	< .01
d. Use of lecture format	49	87.8	48	91.7	56	66.1	12.95	< .01
e. Use of guest speakers	49	73.5	48	70.8	56	48.2	8.86	< .05
f. Use of books	49	69.4	48	43.8	56	30.4	16.28	< .001
g. Use of films	49	63.3	48	35.4	56	25.0	16.63	< .001
h. Use of field trips	49	81.6	48	41.7	56	46.4	19.15	< .001
<b>III. Job Development and Selective Placement Techniques</b>								
a. Developing cooperative work/study sites	58	69.0	56	44.6	66	30.3	18.73	< .001
<b>IV. Follow-up Activities</b>								
a. Routine follow-up services to students	57	63.2	54	27.8	63	54.0	14.93	< .001
b. Routine follow-up services to employers	56	53.6	54	27.8	63	50.8	8.48	< .05

a greater number of these agencies stated a preference for the individualized instruction mode over group situations. In contrast, postsecondary and residential high school programs demonstrated a strong trend toward the use of a group format; postsecondary respondents also indicated a preference for this type of instruction.

In terms of instructional activities employed, rehabilitation facilities tended to utilize significantly fewer guest speakers, books, and films than the educational institutions responding. In contrast, the residential high schools demonstrated a significantly more frequent use of books, films, and field trip activities when compared to other program respondents.

In relation to job development and selective placement strategies, a significantly greater number of high school programs develop cooperative work/study sites with employers, while fewer rehabilitation facilities offer this

service. Finally, in regard to follow-up services, significantly fewer postsecondary programs offer this service to students and employers.

#### Summary and Conclusions

With the exceptions of the self-directed search strategy of teaching clients how to make phone contacts with prospective employers (41% usage), the selective placement practices of requesting employers to waive/modify standard educational or employment test requirements (42% usage), and the development of cooperative work-experience/study sites (47% usage), over 50% of the total respondents employed every self-directed search and selective placement strategy listed on the questionnaire. In over one-third of the cases, 70% or more of the responding agencies indicated the use of a particular strategy.

Forty-nine percent of the respondents reported offering routine follow-up services to

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clients and 42% said this service was regularly available to employers. Of those agencies/institutions not offering a regular program of follow-up services, 42% stated that they would provide the service to a client requesting it and 60% would respond to an employer's request for such services. Overall, however, it would appear that almost "everyone" is doing almost "everything" to some extent. The numerous comments recorded and additional strategies listed by respondents demonstrate the interest in this topic.

A chi-square analysis revealed several significant differences among the three types of agencies responding. It is not surprising that a significantly greater number of postsecondary programs teach job-ready students how to compose and distribute cover letters to employers and that they less frequently instruct students in employment orientation information or provide follow-up services. It is also expected that this type of program would demonstrate a strong trend toward preference for the use of group instruction modes. These practices and modes of instruction reflect the type of setting and the hearing-impaired clientele served.

Residential high school programs, on the other hand, might well be expected to assume the tasks of teaching students about employer practices and developing work/study sites. This group of respondents also demonstrated a significantly greater use of group instruction. Again, these differences are attributable to the general nature of the setting. It is more difficult to understand why the secondary educational programs utilize more books, films, and field-trip experiences than postsecondary programs and rehabilitation agencies. One possible explanation is that printed and audio-visual materials are in more abundant supply for this population.

Finally, independent rehabilitation agencies made significantly less frequent use of the group instruction format and generally reported a preference for an individualized instruction mode. This finding can be attributed to the diverse nature of clients served as well as the "rolling admissions" practice of these

agencies. These agencies also utilized fewer guest speakers, books, and films than the education settings. There is also a definite lack of print and media resources in rehabilitation facility settings. Fewer than one-third of the rehabilitation respondents had developed cooperative work/study sites for their clients. Although cooperative work/study sites are most often associated with school settings, it is possible that this is a potential placement avenue not fully explored by the majority of these agencies.

### **Recommendations**

The results of this survey comprise the initial step by the Arkansas Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Deafness and Hearing Impairment toward the improvement of placement services for adult deaf populations. The information garnered through the questionnaire describes the state of the art and suggests several directions for further research.

First, while this study examines differences among three types of agencies (residential schools, postsecondary programs, and rehabilitation/community service programs), it would also be helpful to examine job placement and client education strategies within each type of agency.

For example, it would be useful to know what type of approach community colleges are using as opposed to vocational-technical institutes. Does the size of the client population of a particular program impact on the strategies employed? Does the funding level of the program or the type of training offered influence the type of placement strategies used?

Second, there is a clear need evidenced for further research regarding the efficacy of various curricula and materials for teaching job-seeking skills and self-directed search techniques to hearing-impaired clients. While most programs seem to be using many of the techniques assessed by this study, there is scant research to assist the practitioner in knowing which approaches are successful with specific populations or in specific settings.

Third, there is a need to develop and/or modify existing curricula, media, and means of assessing job readiness, particularly with re-



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gard to postsecondary and rehabilitation populations. One reason why the postsecondary and rehabilitation programs reported a diminished use of instructional media and material may simply be that these tools are not readily available in forms suitable for use with an adult population. Interagency sharing of resources and strategies is also to be encouraged as a vehicle for assisting practitioners in obtaining a knowledge of what materials, methods, and techniques are available and, among these, which are most effective.

Finally, responses to this survey clearly indicate that the selection of a placement approach must be client-specific, i.e., no one approach is likely to have equal effectiveness with all hearing-impaired clients. For example, it seems logical to assume that self-directed efforts might be more appropriate to a higher-

functioning client group. However, there has been little research to document this. Further studies are needed to determine the best way of matching specific placement strategies and tools with the individual needs and capabilities of deaf clients.

In conclusion, this study affirms that the possibilities for enhancing placement techniques used with deaf clients are as exciting as they are numerous. The foundations for both client-directed search activities and counselor-directed placement are clearly in place in current practice. With better materials and methods and with supportive research to document the effectiveness of these approaches, practitioners will be better able to ensure that each client receives the necessary tools and services to successfully enter the work force.

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