

“HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS IN POSTSECONDARY SETTINGS” – ADVOCACY INFORMATION

This guide contains information that is useful and applicable in a number of different ways.

- There are detailed descriptions and examples of persons with hearing loss throughout the book. This includes information about the full spectrum of students with hearing loss from high school age through adults. There are also descriptions of various hearing losses and how different age groups can be affected and impacted. Readers with hearing loss will identify with the stories, recognize issues similar to what they may face and gain ideas for their own use.
- This document is the first *comprehensive* guide available for service providers addressing the needs of persons with hearing loss as a unique population. The descriptions, stories, data, model service programs, technology, etc. explains to the reader how being hard of hearing affects every aspect of daily living which therefore greatly impacts their postsecondary training and work experience.
- The application and usefulness of this guide is not limited to service providers at the postsecondary level. The scope of the information is applicable to all human service providers by providing accurate information about the overall and specific impact of the hearing loss. This includes dispelling often long held misconceptions that previously resulted in little or inappropriate service provision.

Chapter 1 – *Being Hard of Hearing or Late-Deafened in a “Hearing World”*: Provides insight into the population of hard of hearing students and what it is like to experience hearing loss.

This chapter is particularly helpful to provide a “face” to the problems experienced by hard of hearing persons. Also, the stories show such a variety of individuals with hearing loss, readers will begin to understand that this population is wide spread and vast.

- **Consumer advocates can use this information to raise awareness and sensitivity about hard of hearing students and their needs with postsecondary training programs and other organizations.**
- **Advocates employed in these training programs and organizations can use the info to “make the case” that their students with hearing loss need specialized services.**

Chapter 2 – *Estimating the Number of Hard of Hearing and Late-Deafened Students: Implications for Services Delivery and Job Opportunities.* Presents demographic information and the implications for service delivery.

This chapter provides accurate and comprehensive data to document the need for service providers to pay attention to this population and enhance and/or develop appropriate services.

- **Consumer advocates can use this data in meetings with any local, regional or state administrators to explain the need for planning, developing services and outreach.**
- **Advocates working in these settings can use the information to compare with their existing data and services to determine needed changes and improvements.**

Chapter 3 – *Adjusting to Hearing Loss during High School: Preparing Students for Successful Transition to Postsecondary Education or Training:* Describes the differences and what preparation is needed from secondary to postsecondary training.

Transition planning is required by law. Information in this chapter covers required activities as well as recommendations for partners to be involved and suggested cooperative arrangements for successful transition.

- **Consumer advocates can use this information to become knowledgeable about what is required at the secondary level and the postsecondary level and to understand the similarities and differences. This will help prepare the consumer advocate to work cooperatively with service providers and obtain needed services at each level.**
- **The advocate working within the service system can use this information to review their own accessibility and services and to understand that each student will have individualized needs. The advocate can also work with other colleagues and service providers to address the total learning experience and plan for the next steps and levels of training.**

Chapter 4 – *Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Hard of Hearing or Late-Deafened College Students:* Provides consumers, parents and other service providers with a better understanding of these services available to eligible consumers. In addition, it features several state agencies with specialized services for individuals who are hard of hearing.

VR has only recently begun to recognize the needs of hard of hearing persons as unique and different from persons with deafness. Information available in this chapter discusses how the federal law authorizing the VR program applies specifically to persons who are hard of hearing and details some states that have successfully addressed this population and improved their services.

The consumer advocate:

- Can use this information to review their own state VR program and compare the services with descriptions of other states that have successfully addressed the needs of the hard of hearing population.
- Advocacy can occur informally with local and state VR personnel and administrators as well as with the legally mandated Statewide Council on Vocational Rehabilitation established in each state. Public hearings are also held periodically by state VR agencies to gather information for their state plan.
- Consumers can support VR to get additional state and federal funding to ensure services are available to eligible persons who are hard of hearing.

Advocates working within the VR system:

- Can use this chapter as a starting point for understanding needed program revisions that will better serve consumers who are hard of hearing.
- Along with this document, the new edition of the “Model State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation Services to Persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing, or Late Deafened – 2008” (MSP), also provides specific, detailed information of needed components to serve this population. The MSP also includes an assessment model for state VR agencies to identify problem areas and develop a strategic plan for improvements.
- VR service providers can also become involved in any local or state HLAA meetings to become familiar with local needs and foster collaboration.

Partnerships between consumer organizations (local and state HLAA chapters) and state VR service providers can be formed formally and informally. An example of a Memorandum of Understanding that can be used to develop this agreement is included in the document.

Partnerships at the national level can also be formed to share information and promote understanding about consumers who are hard of hearing and ways VR can better serve them. Some ideas include:

- VR can use persons who have completed the HLAA Academy of Hearing Loss Specialists as resources and possible vendors to assist hard of hearing consumers.
- More information about VR services can be included in the HLAA website and journal, including articles about consumers using VR services in different ways. Also, more materials about VR practices and services can be available on the HLAA website.
- HLAA officials can be involved in the Council of State VR Administrators (directors) in Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Committee on Services to Individuals who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened to help ensure states are addressing these needs. Currently there is a MOU between HLAA and this Committee.
- Counselors and other VR personnel can attend and make presentations at state and national HLAA conferences.

Some barriers to successful advocacy to the state VR programs are:

- VR is an eligibility program and due to many years of level funding, many states are in an order of selection which means they cannot serve all eligible consumers, usually only those with the most significant disabilities. Since persons who are hard of hearing are often unaware of their work related problems and functional limitations or are reluctant to admit difficulties and disability, they may not be correctly identified in the VR system.
- Hearing aid costs often overwhelm VR budgets in providing services to consumers who are hard of hearing. Securing additional funding sources such as insurance companies is needed.

Chapter 5 – *A Model Program to Provide Accommodations to College Students Who Are Hard of Hearing*: Offers service providers a model with specific information about the kinds of services and support that can be offered by a postsecondary education or training program.

Similarly to the previous chapter, information contained here explains what is legally required for accessibility to persons who are hard of hearing. However, the focus here

is what a model accessibility program in postsecondary program can look like and how these initiatives can greatly enhance the experience of the hard of hearing student.

The consumer advocate:

- Can use this information when meeting with their local Student Access Center office about their own service needs, especially if the program is not experienced in providing these services.
- Contact their regional PEPNet center to learn of materials, resources and technical assistance.
- Look for opportunities to become involved in student advisory boards, etc.

The advocate working within the Student Access Center:

- Can use this model to review and make any needed changes in their services and accessibility.
- Become involved in the local and regional network of PEPNet for assistance and access to information and other experienced professionals.

Chapter 6 – *Enhancing Communications Outside the Classroom*: Emphasizes how access in other campus settings can be provided because students do not spend all of their time in the classroom.

“A Typical Day in the Life of a Student with Hearing Loss”, shows the reader that to be successful in the postsecondary setting the entire experience must be assessed and addressed. Again, this description helps to “put a face” to the hard of hearing student.

- The consumer advocate can use this information to help his VR Counselor and his Student Access Center Coordinator understand what other accommodations are needed outside the classroom.

Chapter 7 – *Audiological Considerations for the Management of College Students with Hearing Loss*

Chapter 8 – *Communication Access Options: Hearing Assistance Technology*

Ch. 7 & 8: Addresses technology that can play a significant role in communication access for students who are hard of hearing. These chapters discuss hearing loss and the use of hearing aids and assistive listening devices, and also describe other types of technology that can be used effectively in a variety of settings.

These chapters contain some of the most up to date information and is particularly clear and useful in determining what to consider and as a “how to” guide.

- All states have Independent Living Centers and Assistive Technology programs. Consumer advocates can contact these programs to determine what, if any, services are focused on hard of hearing needs and if they have any available and up to date technology. HLAA Assistive Technology Specialists could be excellent advocates and resources to these centers.
- Advocates working in these programs can use this chapter to review their own technology resources and plan for updated and expanded programs.
- There are a lot of Hearing Aid Specialists in each state, but few hearing assistive technology specialists available knowledgeable about the wide array of technology that can be used.

References

Resources

Appendices: Examples of Memorandums of Understanding can help states to develop partnerships between VR and consumers groups such as state HLAA chapters and other organizations.

Advocates can use these to initiate contacts and begin collaboration in their local areas and/or at the state level.