

Your Parents Are Not With You Anymore!

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For years parents have been cautioned, "It's time to cut the apron strings." As a provider of services to Deaf adolescents, we see more and more of our students either cut loose without the tools to be independent, or overprotected and smothered by parents who mean well but don't understand that becoming independent is one of the first steps in turning dreams into reality.

At this conference two years ago, one of the presentations emphasized that too many Deaf adolescents were not being prepared to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. While the presenter was concentrating mainly on academic programs, it is believed that this lack of preparation also applies to employment and community involvement.

It is mandatory that we as service providers, assist our students or clients in accumulating the tools that will empower them to cope with the transition and change from dependence to independence thus enabling them to be ready for opportunities as they arise.

Program For Hearing Impaired Description

The Program for Hearing Impaired (PHI) is a one year, transitional program which takes place following high school graduation. The program is based on a work-study concept and enrolls approximately 50 students annually. Since its establishment in 1960, the focus of PHI has always been to enable Deaf and Hard of Hearing young adults the opportunity to realistically evaluate and improve their academic, vocational, social and independent living skills. Admission to the program is based on the following criteria:

Disability: Hearing impairment sufficiently severe enough to affect the development of academic, vocational, or social achievement;

Age: 17-24;

I.Q.: Minimum of 80 on the Performance section of the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale; and

Marital Status: Single.

The Program is divided into the *Six Week Summer Program* followed by the *Nine Month Program*. The purpose of the summer program is to provide an intensive diagnostic evaluation which will assist students, referring agencies, and parents in establishing future vocational, academic, and personal plans. The *Nine Month Program* is divided into three separate tracks. The *Pre-Vocational Track* serves

about 75% of our students. The students in this track are enrolled in classes for half a day and work the other half day. The remaining 25% of the students either fall into the *College Preparatory Program* or the *Cooperative Alternative Secondary Program (CASP)*. The College Prep Program is designed to provide the necessary academic skills for those students who are realistically planning to continue their education at the postsecondary level. CASP is for the one or two students each year who have not completed their senior year of high school, but for one reason or another prefer to complete the requirements for graduation by attending PHI. The students in all three tracks are required to maintain a part-time work experience. All of the students are housed in one of the university residence halls. Most of the classes are self-contained and taught by one of our state certified instructors or by one of the two counselors employed by PHI. The Program also employs its own residence hall staff to live on the floor with the students. The program director, secretary and coordinator complete the official staff. The staff is, however, fortunate enough to be able to draw on the expertise of a large auxiliary staff which includes university faculty, graduate and undergraduate students from Audiology, Rehabilitative Counseling for the Deaf, Deaf Education, and Speech Language and Pathology.

During the Six Week Summer Program, the students are exposed to various part-time jobs that exist in the local community as well as on campus. The job description for the Program Coordinator lists job development and placement as one of the primary job roles. Job tours to these sites are scheduled and job interviews are arranged for each student's first work preference. It is important to be honest and up front about the work experience. Part-time employment is seldom one's career goal. Whenever possible, personal preferences and individual abilities are considered. However, it is important for the student to be flexible since part-time employment is usually based on job availability and availability of time in one's schedule. A part-time job helps foster good work habits, develop self confidence, and provides spending money.

PHI stresses classes, work, and independent living skills throughout the nine months. These skills are evaluated with a mini-report midway through both first and second semesters. Comprehensive reports are written at the end of each semester and mailed to the students' counselors from the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). During the final month of the second semester, DORS counselors from the students' home areas are strongly encouraged to meet with their clients at PHI for a half day staffing. This helps to reintroduce the student and their DORS counselor, and outlines the future plans and decisions of the student.

Tools for Success

It has been stated that most working people change jobs between 5 and 7 times in their lifetime. Many of these job changes will require additional academic classes and re-training. That is the reason for this presentation. The presentation will focus on two areas that are emphasized in the Program curriculum. The first is a required one-year class for all students that incorporates career exploration, consumer economics, and the development of independent living skills. As each unit is completed, the information is

placed in a file folder. At the conclusion of the Program, the students have well organized files that contain both personal and useful information that will assist them in not only seeking future employment but in functioning independently as productive members of their communities. These 'tools' not only give the student a more positive self-concept but a feeling of control, knowing that they do not have to rely on mom and dad totally.

It would be prudent to explain to your students or clients that as their circumstances change and they become more established in a permanent location, some of these items would best be kept in a safety deposit box.

File Box Information

Employment

- Pay stubs for current year
- Identification: Social Security card, birth certificate, passport or alien registration card
- Resume, list of personal references, pocket resume
- *Looking for a Job* handouts

Financial

- Savings/investments records
- Bank statements, canceled checks
- Credit card account numbers

Medical

- Immunization records
- Audiograms

Insurance

- Health insurance brochure and policy
- Car insurance policy
- Property insurance policy or tenant insurance policy

Education/Training

- Copies of completed Financial Aid Form (FAF)
- IWRP (Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan) from Vocational Rehabilitation
- High school diploma
- Training certificates, licenses

Income Tax

- Tax returns (previously filed)

Housing/Property

- *Tips for Renting an Apartment* handouts
- Written inventory of property
- Receipts for large purchases, vehicle title

- Service contracts, warranties and manuals

Community Resources

- Centers for Independent Living
- Social Security office
- Department of Transportation

Choosing Post-Secondary Education

This past year, *USA Today* published information on what teachers thought students should know to be successful. The following are the results of that survey:

- 95% cited the need for problem solving skills
- 67% said informational technology was important
- 63% commented on the need for advanced math and science classes
- 42% felt the mastery of a second language correlated with success.

How do you measure success? Are we talking about a degree from one of the top 10 universities in the United States? Or are we talking about a million dollar paycheck? In order to encompass all aspects of success, we can choose to look at a more broad definition. A person is a success if they are able to turn their dream into reality.

There are many reasons for obtaining post-secondary training. It might permit a learner to be at an advantage in the job market or it could help advance them in their current job. Post-secondary training could allow a person to be more mobile and therefore enable them to change career paths if necessary. By receiving training, a learner is able to keep up-to-date with technological advances and is more prepared for relocating if his/her job becomes streamlined or omitted from the company. “The more education an individual has, the more likely they are to find employment” (Rawlings, 1994).

Based on 1991 U.S. Census Bureau information, there was clearly a positive relationship between years completed in school and employment rates (Lam, 1994). The following are the results of the census:

- A person with 4 years of college had an unemployment rate of 2.4%.
- A person with 1 to 3 years of college had a 3.2% unemployment rate.
- A person with a high school degree had a 4.5% unemployment rate.

When considering post-secondary training, an individual has many options today. In the 1800s, there was really only one option for individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Gallaudet College (now Gallaudet University) was the option for about 100 years (Rawlings, 1994). Today there are many more options available for learners that are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. These options include colleges, universities, technical/vocational schools, community colleges, on-the-job training, training programs, and workshops. With the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, more and more options are becoming available each year.

In order to help learners become more prepared for the educational choices they may face, the following areas are covered:

- Listening skills
- Note taking techniques
- Preparing for and participating in class discussions
- Scheduling study time
- Preparing for and taking exams

Listening Skills

Listening is the most common way learners learn. For the persons who are Deaf, this would mean listening with their eyes. Listening is, however, the most difficult skill to master. Although many learners appear to be listening, they are not actually doing so.

In order to be a successful listener, learners must be able to identify the purpose of the lecture. Once the purpose of the lecture is identified, the main points and supporting details for the lecture need to be identified. By keeping the points organized in some kind of structure, the learners will be able to evaluate what they have seen or heard.

Throughout the lecture, the instructor may use a variety of clues to indicate important facts. It is up to the learner to become familiar with the style of the instructor. The following are some of the more common clues used by instructors: change in voice/expression; change in rate of speech/signing; listing and numbering points; using media equipment; writing on the board; direct announcements; and non-verbal clues (i.e. pointing, using fingers to count, etc.).

By identifying and using these techniques, learners will be able to listen and question more critically. They will also be more actively involved in the discussion.

Note Taking Techniques

The purpose of teaching note taking to the learners is to help them to become more skilled at deciding which information is important enough to write down and remember and which information is not. Second, it is important that notes are taken in an organized way so that they become a useful tool to use later. Each learner has his or her own style for taking notes. It is, however, important to be thorough and effective when taking notes. Whether the notes are from in-class lectures or from the textbook, they should not be lengthy or unfocused.

There are three important reasons notes are taken. The first reason is because it is impossible to remember everything that is presented during the semester; memory tends to fade and pushes less important facts out. Next, the instructor is sure to test on the material discussed at a later date. Finally, good note taking skills can help to ensure good grades. Listed below are ways that will make note taking easier.

- Use ink.
- Use regular size paper.
- Keep separate note books for each class.
- Date all notes.

- Leave large margins or lines between notes for additions later.
- Mark ideas that are confusing.
- Sit as close to the front as possible.
- Use abbreviations.

By using a more structured method such as outlining or concept mapping, the notes will be more organized and easier to use. Finally, in order to prepare for a lecture, become familiar with the main topic and read ahead.

Participating In Discussions

Many instructors prefer to lecture when conducting class while others handle class in a more informal way by using a discussion method. A lecture class provides more factual information whereas a discussion class allows the learner to react, evaluate, and think critically about controversial issues.

Preparing for a discussion takes more time than preparing for a lecture style class. Before a discussion, the learner will need to have read the required materials, reviewed and taken notes on the concepts that are unclear, and analyze what was read by making comments about concepts that provide poor examples or examples that include weak arguments. Finally, having questions ready will keep the discussion moving smoothly and prevent it from becoming a lecture.

During the actual discussion, the learner will have as much responsibility as the instructor to keep the discussion moving. The learner must assume an active role by participating. Participation requires that the learner ask good questions, make suggestions that can add to the previous responses of peers, and correct comments made by others that may be incorrect. While the discussion is taking place, it is important to take summary notes that include key points. Studying for tests after a discussion-type class will take less time. It is, however, important to review notes, review reading assignments, try to guess possible test questions for exams based on the class discussion and notes taken during discussion, and read assignments.

Studying

“Studying is defined as the process that is used to decide what will be learned and how to remember and recall information” (Shepard, 1987). Many learners dislike schedules; they would prefer to just be free to do what they want, when they want. They fear that they won’t be spontaneous if they are restricted to a set time for everything. In the end, however, a schedule for studying will free up time simply because the activities that must be done will get done without procrastination. A study schedule essentially helps to balance time. It is important to remember that a schedule is flexible and adjustments can easily be made. The primary purpose of a schedule is to provide a framework for using time efficiently. Doing one's best in each course requires knowing the instructor’s requirements, attending class regularly, taking a note book to class, taking good notes, keeping up-to-date with assignments, and being prepared for tests.

The steps for scheduling study time depend on how much there is to study, how much time there is for studying, what needs to be studied, and when and where the studying will take place. Before scheduling study time, it is necessary to know all of the activities for the day. Finally, using visual aids such as weekly schedules, a schedule book, or monthly calendars will help to keep all activities organized.

Preparing For And Taking Tests

Most learners are given three types of tests throughout the time they attend formal education: teacher-made, textbook or publisher-made, and standardized tests. Having discussions about the testing situations can help both the learner and the instructor. Learners often have anxieties about testing and they should be encouraged to ask questions to make them feel more comfortable. When the instructor helps the learner to feel more at ease and secure about testing situations, the learner can focus on the test more fully. The following are some suggestions for helping the learner.

- Let the learner know the purpose of the test.
- Inform the learner as to how the test will be scored.
- Provide information about how the test will affect the grades.
- Let the learner know what will happen with the results of the test.

When questions such as these are answered, test anxiety decreases and the learner may feel more confident about test-taking abilities.

Learning is made easier by drawing together the information at hand. Having a general idea or goal of the class, knowing how topics are connected, looking for patterns and preparing charts or outlines are other ways to ease anxiety. The information and how it is remembered depends on the type of test that will be given.

There are two basic type of tests: objective and subjective tests. Objective tests require that the learner know exactly the right answers. Tests such as true/false, multiple choice and matching are examples of objective tests. Subjective tests require more complete recall, organization of information from the memory, and being able to express the information in an acceptable written form such as an essay.

While Deaf and Hard of Hearing young adults are often prepared to meet the requirements of high school, many are unprepared to meet the challenges of what will follow high school graduation. When goals are defined, an important sense of direction is provided for the student. The student is then sure of a direction and becomes more sure of the path to take to be successful. The curriculum that has been developed and implemented at the Program for Hearing Impaired assists the students in addressing the challenges of life and, in addition, helps them move into the next phase of adulthood.

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