

Empowerment Through Partnerships: Funding Programs and Services to Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

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Abstract

In postsecondary education, there is a growing demand for specialized support services to address the unique needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Costs for service delivery continue to increase as resources continue to diminish. Several states have developed model partnerships between agencies. Panelists from Oklahoma will present the problems they are encountering with the withdrawal of funding from Vocational Rehabilitation. Panelists from Kentucky and New Jersey will each present their model that has addressed this problem. They will also discuss their similarities and differences, what worked and what didn't work, how to garner support within your institution and state, and how the political climate has influenced the outcomes in each state.



Pat Gleich:

The topic of this panel presentation deals with partnerships. I don't know anyone who has all the resources they need for their program, so all of us are out there looking for creative ways to bring those much-needed resources to our programs. Today, we are focusing on three programs: one from New Jersey, one from Oklahoma, and one from Kentucky. We will talk about the ways they have sought to find program resources.

Don Hastings:

Good morning. I'm the Coordinator of the Resource Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at Tulsa Community College. My prior experiences include being a rehabilitation counselor with a general caseload as well as the deaf caseload. I'm also the Executive Director of a community agency serving the deaf community.

Currently in Oklahoma, we're right in the middle of the transition from a previous contract partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) that we've had for many years. The previous contracts are being phased out, and we're going to share what we're trying to do while in the middle of this whole process. The representatives from New Jersey and Kentucky will share the models they have developed about what is working for them. To set the stage, I will show a short clip of a recent satellite broadcast that many of you may have already seen: "Beyond the Surface: Implementing ADA In Postsecondary Education." Jeanne Kincaid, an attorney, is the moderator of this presentation, and RSA Commissioner Dr. Fred Schroeder is featured.¹

Basically, Dr. Schroeder did not commit the state VR agencies to provide the first dollar. Furthermore, he talked about the fact that VR is still responsible for their clients concerning the Individual Written Rehabilitation Programs (IWRPs) to make sure their clients do receive the proper support services that are needed for them to complete their IWRP. If that includes a college education, VR is still involved in that process. However, he also strongly indicated the need for collaboration and partnership with higher education. That's where I would like to focus in terms of our discussion of partnerships.

I'd like to give you some background about what is happening in Oklahoma. We've had a very good relationship with Vocational Rehabilitation over the years, and they have really taken a leadership role in providing

¹ For more information about viewing a copy of this tape, please contact the PEPNet Resource Center at <<http://www.pepnet.org>>.

services for individuals who are Deaf and hard of hearing. For example, we've had interpreter services for a variety of community and medical needs long before it was mandated by ADA because VR set that up statewide. Also, VR set up a statewide equipment distribution program. Deaf and hard of hearing people who need a TTY can apply and get one. They also set up the state relay system before it was required. Even before 504 was implemented, VR set up a contract with higher education to provide services for Deaf and hard of hearing students. So VR has really been, and still is, a partner, but now we have to redefine that relationship, especially in higher education and in light of what Dr. Schroeder is saying. According to Dr. Schroeder, the relationship between ADA and 504 hasn't been tested in court yet. That's what he alluded to, and it may take a court case to really define that relationship. I'm not sure.

But in Oklahoma we've had a contract with Vocational Rehabilitation that's been a good model. It started off with one college back in the 1970s, but has now expanded to six institutions. This includes two universities, two community colleges, and a vocational technical school. Each of these schools has full-time staff who are fluent in sign language, and offer a range of support services. In my opinion, we have a strong model of providing access to higher education for Deaf and hard of hearing students.

The contracts that we've had were individualized, and interpreter services, notetakers, and tutors were included within those contracts. At Tulsa Community College, we've also had a teaching position that was funded by VR. Some other schools may have had advisors or counselors. That contract has changed a little bit the last couple years, but historically, that's been the bulk of where the money went. As we go into this transition phase, right now we're trying to define how we're going to work through this. This is something that Pat is going to share with us shortly.

Debra Hamilton from the Disabled Student Services of Rensselaer Polytechnical Institute wrote a paper that indicated the need for Vocational Rehabilitation to remain involved in higher education. Legally, that is still the mandate. Those laws are still in effect and those court cases have not been overturned. So there's still that relationship. But I think the broader issue is what could happen in higher education if the mentality is to provide only what's required by the ADA, period. Comprehensive services must be considered. That's where the beautiful marriage is happening when VR goes above and beyond what ADA requires. We can offer the tutorial services and special classes, and have an accomplished counselor that can really identify with the Deaf and hard of hearing students.

That's what I think the message is: we need to continue that relationship, so that the total needs for Deaf and hard of hearing students can be met.

Pat Stowe:

I'm from Oklahoma City Community College where we have a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program due to the contracts Don just mentioned. We were one of the last to come into the partnership and develop a contract with Oklahoma VR. We began in 1990.

One of the things that we are looking at in Oklahoma is how to reestablish links to keep these programs at the level of services that they are now enjoying. All of the colleges and universities have the responsibility to provide accommodation to all of their students, whether it's an assistive listening device, an interpreter, or real-time captioning, for example. We understand that obligation.

However, within the six institutions that were selected to begin Deaf and hard of hearing programs, we have professional staff experienced in issues of deafness and hearing loss. One of our concerns is that as we lose funding, our colleges and universities might not be capable, for whatever reason, of replacing the funds that we're losing. We will have to reduce those additional services. And we know historically that deaf people, like any other group that is not within the dominant culture, prefer to be where other deaf people are. Our institution already has a reputation, as do all the contract institutions, of providing strong support classes, like special English and math classes geared specifically

toward the Deaf and hard of hearing.

From our perspective, speaking only for myself, it seems that we're somehow being penalized for doing an outstanding job in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program. Oklahoma City Community College will continue to have 30 or more Deaf and hard of hearing students. Tulsa Community College will continue to have 60 or more, as will the other institutions with programs. These institutions will have larger Deaf and hard of hearing populations than other institutions of higher education in the state of Oklahoma.

In order to understand the issues and consequences of VR's reduced funding, we tried to start a forum, or a dialogue, under the umbrella of Oklahoma AHEAD (OKAHEAD). We had representatives from our institutions that were in administrative levels. We invited the Department of Rehabilitation Services, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services to be a part of a panel. We had a lot of dialogue, during which they tried to express the funding issues VR faces and how, if in any way, the ADA influences policies. Although we have not yet been penalized, that possibility exists after the contracts expire. Vocational Rehabilitation had contracts with us for 70 percent of the program's entire budget. So if I have \$150,000 budget, 70 percent was coming from the state. As they reduce by 25 percent each year, my college has to either pick up the lost revenue or find some place else to get it. If not, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program will shrink and we will provide only accommodations that are required by law. We will not be able to provide the enhancements that our students really need to be successful in higher education. So we set up a forum to meet, to have an open discussion regarding this issue. What we're trying to do in Oklahoma is establish those ties with VR, with the State Board of Regents, and with the President's Council. Do we need to go to the state legislature? What do we need to do so the programs don't become only accommodation providers? One of the things that we have done is contact the State Board of Regents. We've sent a letter to the president of the President's Council in our state. The Council is comprised of presidents from all the institutions. We asked that they help engage the assistance of the Board of Regents to secure funding from the legislature that will support these Deaf and Hard of Hearing programs. We asked them if they would assist us in establishing a permanent committee comprised of institution representatives and the Board of Regents to develop policies and procedures for program supervision and funding.

We've asked that the State Board of Regents assume leadership to determine legal responsibility for funding auxiliary aids, but we have not yet heard back from them. We've had no response from that letter. We just finished another Oklahoma AHEAD meeting where we brought in Marc Charmatz from the National Association for the Deaf (NAD) Law Center. I have some handouts that include the information I will be quoting from. These are materials Marc made available to us. The NAD Law Center considered the responsibilities of VR to their clients, and the responsibilities of the colleges to all students. Quoting from these materials, it is their perspective that: "Moreover, VR is required by law to provide interpreter services necessary for educating and training deaf clients when these services cannot be obtained from another source or from a similar benefit. It has been determined that a college's legal obligation under Section 504 to provide sign language interpreters to deaf students is not a similar benefit. Vocational Rehabilitation cannot avoid providing this service as VR, in this case, has the primary obligation to provide sign language interpreters to its deaf clients attending college. A court has ruled that a state Vocational Rehabilitation agency, not a postsecondary institution, has the primary duty to provide assistance to a deaf student."

We are not legal aides, but this gives us reason to question the actions of VR. Maybe the ADA has done something to shift some responsibility. I don't know, and we're not here to debate that. We're just here to say that developing partnerships and collaboration with the state, the legislature, and VR is the only way that we're going to have the kind of educational system that we believe is necessary for Deaf and hard of hearing students to succeed in postsecondary education.

Patricia Gleich:

It sounds like Oklahoma has basically put the feet to the fire as far as figuring out what the legal responsibilities are. That's a very important perspective. Our next group of presenters is from New Jersey.

Josie Durkow, Angela Suchanic, and Patricia Tomlinson:

Camden County College, host of the MidAtlantic Postsecondary Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, is located in the southwestern part of New Jersey in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. The college, founded in the mid 1960's, has a main campus in Blackwood and a branch campus in the city of Camden. Plans are underway for a third campus to be built in Cherry Hill, which will focus on serving the business community. Total enrollment at the college in the fall of 1997 was 11,935.

The college offers a variety of programs and services for the deaf and hard of hearing communities. These include: the MidAtlantic Postsecondary Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (which we will be focusing on today); the South Jersey Evaluation and Employment Services for the Deaf (SEED); the NJ State Site for the Northeast Technical Assistance Center; Happy Hands Summer Camp for children who are deaf and hard of hearing; an Interpreter Education program; and a Sign Language Studies program.

The MidAtlantic Postsecondary Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing serves 63 students. It offers the following comprehensive services to deaf and hard of hearing college students: interpreting; tutoring; notetaking; counseling; assistive devices; transition services; developmental English classes for the deaf; and certificate programs designed to meet the needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. It also provides technical assistance to other colleges and universities in the state about accommodations for deaf and hard of hearing students.

This program began ten years ago because of a set of unique partnerships; because of the original partnerships and new partnerships which have since been built, the program has grown in number of students served and the quality of its services. This session will highlight the history of these partnerships – focusing especially on the partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation and the state coordinating agency for higher education.

In the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) arena, much occurred during the 1960's and 1970's related to specialized services to meet the unique communication and technological needs of individuals with hearing loss. VR was an early proponent of the need for interpreters and other technology and support services in order for students who are deaf to appropriately access postsecondary education situations.

Prior to 1964, when the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) was established, there were no interpreter standards or training programs. People providing interpreting for deaf people were mainly volunteers. Payment, when it did occur, rested on the generosity or capability of the agency or individual hiring them.

VR counselors did not have expertise in deafness or associated modes of communication. They did not know about interpreter use, availability, or qualifications, and therefore seldom were they used. As a result, deaf people were reluctant to apply for VR services where their communication needs were not understood or met.

Few counselors who were themselves deaf worked as VR counselors. Few postsecondary programs were appropriate to the needs of students who were deaf. VR clients were usually sponsored out of state at Gallaudet College, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), or St. Paul Technical-Vocational Institute (TVI) – all of which had interpreters and other support services built into their program and tuition.

The climate began to change with the passage of the VR Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-333). This was the first federal legislation which dealt specifically with deafness and the utilization of interpreters. It made direct reference to deaf people and authorized for the first time interpreting as a VR case service for deaf clients. This opened an important new means for VR agencies to improve services and outreach to deaf people.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 93-112) started to change the complexion of VR services to all disability groups, including deafness. It included deaf people in the definition of “severely handicapped.” It set forth priorities for serving individuals with the most severe disabilities. And it was the most far reaching – it included Section 504 which prevents discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

After the passage of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, VR agencies began to develop specialized programs and services for individuals who are deaf. They hired staff specialists in deafness and developed agency standards and fee schedules for hiring interpreters. Where few interpreters were RID-certified, some states developed their own Quality Assurance system. They trained staff and vendors in interpreter use, interpreter role and ethics, and confidentiality issues. They trained staff and vendors on the variety of communication modes used by people with hearing loss. They installed TTYs and assistive listening devices.

In 1975 the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) was passed mandating greater integration of handicapped children including deaf children, into the public school systems. Children with hearing loss were now better identified, more were referred to VR, and many now wished to attend postsecondary school near home, or in mainstreamed settings. These schools did not have special grants or resources for interpreters and support services, and began to look to VR to provide the financial support for these services in addition to the usually funded tuition, room and board, books, supplies, and the like.

New Jersey VR implemented its “deaf program” in 1975. A State Coordinator of Services for the Deaf (SCD) and counselors (RCDs) who were specialized in deafness and skilled in sign language were hired. Specialized policies, practices, and services to better serve the needs of individuals who are deaf were developed and implemented statewide. This coincided with passage of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1978 (P.L. 95-602) which expanded mandated communication access to the mainstream of the habilitation and rehabilitation process.

In the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, the NJ Department of Higher Education began to take a look at the meaning of the term “access.” According to the 1981 Statewide Plan for Higher Education, access meant not only the opportunity to enroll, but also the opportunity to satisfy educational needs and to develop latent abilities to the fullest extent possible, to choose appropriate educational courses, and to have the supportive services necessary to succeed. In 1983, an ad hoc advisory council of higher education representatives was appointed to explore the special needs of New Jersey’s college students. The council recommended that the provision of appropriate support services become a priority of the Department of Higher Education.

In 1985, the Department hired a consultant to do a preliminary investigation of the status of programs and services for special needs students. A survey conducted that same year found no college offering a specialized program for students who were deaf or hard of hearing. To make such access a reality for individuals with different disabilities, the state legislature passed the Higher Education Services for Visually Impaired, Auditorily Impaired and Learning Disabled Students Act in 1985. It was signed into law by Governor Kean in January 1986. The Higher Education Services Act went beyond federal mandates to develop assistive programs and services for students who were visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, or learning disabled.

In response to the new statute, the former Department of Higher Education established a total of eight regional centers for college students with these disabilities. The sites for the regional centers were selected after rigorous proposal reviews in open competition. Four centers for learning disabled students were established in FY 1986, and three centers for deaf students (one of which was to be at Camden County College) were established in FY 1988. A final regional center, an educational resource center for visually impaired students, was established in FY 1990. To ensure that students had access to a full range of course offerings and services at reasonable prices, a chargeback plan was established, allowing out-of-county students to take advantage of in-county tuition rates and fees

if they qualified for the regional center services. Each regional center was expected to: provide comprehensive direct support services to students; offer other colleges technical assistance for program development; disseminate information, educational materials, and program models; and provide faculty/staff training workshops. The centers were also expected to conduct statewide conferences and develop consortia, networks, and other cooperative ventures.

Fiscal support for the development and maintenance of the centers was expected to come from two sources: the host institutions and annual awards to the centers from the former Department of Higher Education. A total of \$750,000 of continuing state support was (and continues to be) contingent upon satisfactory performance by each center during the previous fiscal year, formal reapplication, and the agency's review of site evaluations made by external experts. The former Department originally provided part of the start-up and development costs for the center; it planned to decrease its portion of each subsequent year's on-going costs for the direct services program. In most centers, the institutions covered at least half of the costs. Some colleges also used federal or other grant moneys or income from conferences and other revenue-producing activities to supplement their state grants and available institutional allocations.

In the same time frame that the Department of Higher Education (DHE) began implementation of the Higher Education Services Act, Camden County College hired a new president, Dr. Robert Ramsay, who had a special interest in serving students who are deaf and hard of hearing. He had previously worked as a dean at St. Petersburg Junior College; the Program for the Deaf reported to him. He then moved on to become the President of North Florida Junior College where he was responsible for establishing a program for students who are deaf. Upon arrival at Camden County College in 1987, Dr. Ramsay was committed to establishing a program for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The College's Board of Trustees was in full support of this effort. When the Request for Proposals (RFP) was released and DHE held public hearings about the needs of college students who are deaf and hard of hearing, Camden testified at several of the public hearings that they planned to establish a major program to address the specific needs of these students. In late fall of 1987, three colleges were awarded contracts to establish Centers for Collegiate Deaf Education. This award was intended to fund the start-up and development of the centers over a six-year period. The other colleges receiving awards for deaf centers included: Bergen Community College in Paramus and Gloucester County College in Sewell. Through recruitment activities beginning with New Jersey's Marie Katzenbach School for the Deaf College Fair in October 1987, Camden was able to begin its first semester of operation with 32 students.

To begin the building of a partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Camden formed an advisory group in the summer of 1987 which included service providers for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing. DVR was represented on this advisory group from the start by its State Coordinator of Services for the Deaf. In the spring of 1988, Camden initiated discussions with DVR regarding a contract to cover the costs of sign language interpreters. A contract was awarded that covered the costs of the salaries and benefits of two full-time interpreters for FY 1988-1989. This contract continued through FY 1995-1996. Up until FY 1993-1994, funding increased each year in amount and the number of interpreters.

The relationship with DVR was further expanded in 1990 when Camden responded to DVR's RFP to replicate the Fairlawn Deaf Program (a DVR-funded evaluation and employment service agency serving individuals in the community who are deaf and hard of hearing) and was awarded the grant. This program was named the SEED (South Jersey Evaluation and Employment Services for the Deaf) program. This program is valued by the deaf and hard of hearing community as well as NJ DVR counselors. The program assists individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing in achieving and maintaining successful placement in the workforce.

The relationship between Camden and the NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation can best be described by the following menu of services that are coordinated between the two to meet individualized student needs:

- SEED, the VR funded program administered by the college, provides job readiness training, job seeking skills, job development and placement, and interpreting for on-the-job training.
- The NJ State Coordinator of State Services for the Deaf is an active member of the Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students advisory Board. The State Coordinator and the Center have collaborated and co-sponsored many events.
- NJ DVR has contracted to sponsor a transition counselor position at the Center.
- NJ DVR sponsors students at the Center through payment of tuition, room, and board.
- NJ DVR Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf provide counseling to students at the Center (for other than educational services).

By 1993-94, the Camden program had 13 staff and an enrollment of 104 students. Total funding in FY 1994 was \$604,765 (29% from the Department of Higher Education, 23% from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and 48% from Camden County College).

Over the next two years, however, a series of events occurred that challenged the old partnerships and made it necessary for the program to build new partnerships in order to continue. Those events included:

- Camden County College hired a new President, Dr. Phyllis Della Vecchia, in September 1993.
- The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation announced a decision in 1993 to begin a phase-out of the interpreter contracts in FY 1995.
- The Governor announced the elimination of the former Department of Higher Education, effective July 1994.
- In the funding year beginning July 1995, the college received a reduction in funding from the state and county, which resulted in reduced funding to the Center.
- The program director left in 1995 and a new program director was appointed.
- By 1996, funding for the program had declined to \$440,401 (a decrease of more than 30% in three years); enrollment was deliberately reduced by half in a two-year period; and the number of staff had dropped from 13 to 8.

To its credit, the program responded creatively to these events. For example, the program became a powerful advocate for itself – orienting the college’s new president to its activities, accomplishments, and value; managing with less; restricting enrollment of out-of-state students; continually making its case with DVR and identifying ways other than strictly interpreter contracts that DVR could provide support to the program; and building relationships with the other regional centers to advocate for continued funding of the Special Needs Grant Program.

The program’s status as a regional center was considered to be in jeopardy by the college. The former Department of Higher Education had originally committed to supporting the Special Needs Grant Program for a four-to-six year period. Given that the six-year period had expired and the Department had been abolished, great uncertainty existed about the potential for any future funding for the centers. When the former Department of Higher Education was eliminated, authority for its prior activities was shifted – some to institutional boards of trustees, some to a new body called the Presidents’ Council, and some to a new Commission on Higher Education. Responsibility for the Special Needs Grant Program was placed with the new Commission. With a very small staff of only about 20 people and responsibilities ranging from research to licensure and accreditation, the program was left operating with very limited guidance during FY 1995. The eight regional center directors began to work together to bring their needs to the

attention of the new Commission. The Executive Director of the Commission asked that the centers be level-funded in FY 1996 but that an advisory group be convened and the program studied to make appropriate changes.

In July 1995, the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education approved a resolution to appoint an advisory group to review the program. The group's membership included special needs service directors from two NJ colleges and universities without a regional center, a representative of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, a representative from the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, a representative from the NJ Department of Education, a representative from the NJ Learning Disabilities Association, and the Superintendent of the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf. Two Camden County College students from the regional center for deaf students also served brief terms on the group in its first year.

The group was presented with a charge by the Commission which it converted into several major tasks. Three of the tasks were to have a direct impact on the program at Camden County College. They included recommendations about each existing center, recommendations about future allocations of funds, and a recommendation about the appropriate level of funding for the program through FY 2001.

To fulfill its charge, the advisory group: conducted research on national, statewide, and campus-specific programs for disabled post-secondary students; designed and administered a survey of all special services program directors at colleges and universities in New Jersey – a survey which achieved a 100% response rate; reviewed and analyzed the final expenditure and performance reports for each regional center; made site visits to all of the regional centers; convened and attended a meeting of regional center directors and student representatives; and prepared a detailed final report which was accepted by the Commission in May 1996.

The Special Needs Advisory Group ended up with a set of general findings, specific recommendations about the future of each center, and some general recommendations about improvements to the program. The group noted that the three regional centers for deaf students were serving almost half (47%) of all the deaf and hard of hearing students enrolled in colleges and universities in NJ. However, the other two regional centers for deaf students always had enrollments which were a fraction of those at Camden. The range or depth of services offered at Bergen or Gloucester had never become comparable to those provided at Camden.

The group's specific recommendations about Camden County College called for the Gloucester and Camden programs to be consolidated at the Camden County College site to avoid duplication of services and increase the number of students served. Those two centers for students who were deaf or hard of hearing were within a six mile radius of each other. The group noted that Camden provided more comprehensive services than did Gloucester, including access to specialized career planning and placement services funded by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The Camden program also offered intensive courses in basic skills taught by a teacher of the deaf.

The Special Needs Advisory Group recommended increasing Camden's state grant amount from \$171,750 in FY 1996 to \$177,500 in FY 1997 and \$208,500 in FY 1998. The group also encouraged the Camden County College center to: increase its enrollment; pursue federal designation and funding as a national regional center either solely or in collaboration with other higher education institutions; increase the technical assistance it provided to other New Jersey campuses regarding services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing; hire a full-time counselor; work more collaboratively with the regional center for deaf and hard of hearing students in northern New Jersey; and expand its outreach to high school students and staff to assist in successful transition from high school to post-secondary education.

The general recommendations for the program at large have also had a significant impact on Camden's program. They included a more rational and equitable distribution of state funding across the regional centers based upon enrollments and the cost of providing services to a specific disability group; the establishment of a multi-year

grant period of three years; a specific definition of a regional center to include providing direct service to students with that disability as well as professional development, technical assistance and community awareness activities to individuals and institutions within the state or a designated region; strategies for increased cooperation/collaboration among regional centers, increased transition activities by regional centers, increased collaboration between regional centers and external agencies, and improved consultative services to non-center campuses; and greater accountability for regional center performance.

In FY 1994, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation began to phase-out the interpreter grant because of their interpretation of their responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Camden's response was to discontinue out-of-state recruitment. The college used the 1996 report of the Special Needs Advisory Group to petition the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to continue with its last funding amount of the interpreter grant. The petition demonstrated that the college was going beyond meeting its ADA responsibilities through its funding commitment to the center as seen in its annual budget. The division would not change its position regarding continuing the Interpreter Grant, however, it did consider a creative alternative to continue support of the center. The center proposed that VR fund a transition counselor position. This position would address the needs of the center in terms of outreach to students in high schools (recruitment), assistance with transition to college (new student orientation, advisement and counseling), and assistance with transition to work via referral to the SEED program. This position would also address the interest of NJ DVR in transition planning. The position began to be funded in FY 1997.

The Center's response to the multiple (and almost simultaneous) threats to its existence went beyond simple crisis management. The Center was strategic in the choices it made; it capitalized upon the multiple partnerships it had developed over its first decade and has entered into more new partnerships within the last year. The fact that funding is more stable and that the basis for it is better understood has been beneficial to the program for planning. Awareness of the Camden program has expanded – within the college, in the state, in the region, and even in the nation.

For example, in 1996, the Center considered applying to become a federal regional center for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. With its reduced staffing level, however, the center decided that gaining such designation would not be feasible. It decided to collaborate with several institutions who were applying – one of which was the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID). Camden is now the Northeast Technical Assistance Center's (NETAC) State Site for New Jersey. The scope of its responsibilities in this capacity are a natural extension of its role as state special needs regional center. State coordination responsibilities also permit the expansion of partnerships with other programs around the country.

Camden has become one of the most active partners in collaboration with the other special needs regional centers and that is expected only to grow as Josie has now joined the Special Needs Advisory Group for a term as representative of the regional center directors. The Center has also formed stronger relationships with other agencies such as the NJ Department of Education Office and the Marie Katzenbach School for the Deaf and collaborated on several conferences.

The future is likely to require even more collaboration. As you consider initiating or expanding partnerships with state agencies like the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or the Commission on Higher Education or with other bodies to expand coordination of funding and services, the following list of recommendations might be helpful to you:

- Don't be locked into "old" ways of thinking; be creative and be proactive.
- Maintain basic data about your program (numbers served, services delivered, short-term and long-term success rates).

- Conduct ongoing needs assessment to project future numbers of students and their anticipated communication and other needs.
- Look for new funding sources; find out how you can receive RFPs that might be appropriate for sustaining or expanding your program.
- Look at ways other higher education programs (not necessarily disability services-related) have acquired funding in your state.
- Build and sustain relationships with key individuals at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Commission on Higher Education or like agency, and in other appropriate organizations. Be visible; send newsletters, annual reports, and announcements of events to these key contacts. Invite them to the campus on a regular basis. Stay informed about their priorities (e.g., transition from school to postsecondary education and from postsecondary education to work).
- Establish an external advisory group to the program.
- Constantly scan your environment (to project future numbers of students and their anticipated communication and other needs, to identify potential funding sources, to predict future trends in funding from different sources).
- Involve your staff and the advisory group in developing a plan with best-case, medium-case, and worst-case scenarios; develop strategies to realize the best-case and to prevent the worst-case.
- Try to see challenges as opportunities and be prepared to seize unexpected opportunities.
- Make sure your president supports your program and is interested in expanding its visibility.
- Don't forget to market your program inside your institution.
- Give testimony at public hearings whenever possible about your program, its needs, and its impact.
- Identify potential supporters/advocates – school district personnel, students, college faculty and develop a plan to help them better understand your program and ways they might help communicate the benefits of a coordinated services approach to others.
- Identify potential naysayers and develop a specific plan to demonstrate the value of a coordinated services approach to them.
- Get the word out about students' needs, the services you provide, and the costs of providing those services.
- Get the word out about the needs you can't meet and the services you can't provide because of limited funds.
- Make the case with the appropriate parties about the efficiency and effectiveness of a coordinated services approach.
- Evaluate your program constantly and use the results to make appropriate changes and to further make your case.

There is no simple formula for maintaining partnerships. They require commitment and continuous effort in a constantly changing political environment. At Camden, the Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students has been impacted by political changes on the local level (a new college president), on the state level (a new governor), and on the national level (new federal legislation: ADA). The key to mastering change lies in positioning your program positively within your institution, state, and even within your region of the country. By following the recommendations we have made here, your program will be in an improved position to develop and maintain partnerships.

Patricia Gleich:

The next presenters are from Kentucky where they are developing a model of collaboration that spans from the technical college to the university level.

Vicki Brashear:

I'm the program coordinator from Kentucky Tech - Jefferson Campus in Louisville, Kentucky, and we are the PEC affiliate program for Kentucky. I'm very fortunate as I look around the room to see some of my colleagues here that are part of our collaborative efforts. These colleagues include Luanne Goldsby from Jefferson Community College, Brenna Jackson from University of Louisville, Dr. Laurence Hayes and Dr. Karen Dilka from Eastern Kentucky University, and Ken Puckett and Julie Beth Hayden from Vocational Rehabilitation. I feel all persons involved in postsecondary opportunities in Kentucky work very well together. We have one goal in mind: to make sure that the students are getting the best services they can get.

Our collaborative effort began several years ago when we were all trying to figure out a way to make sure that our students were getting the best interpreters and the best possible services. The Kentucky Tech staff includes five interpreters, one full-time teacher who is deaf herself and has a degree in Deaf Education, plus myself. We developed Deaf TRACK (Technical Readiness and Career/College Knowledge) to focus on reading, writing, grammar, math, the first year experience, and some life skills. Since the tuition at Kentucky Tech is very, very inexpensive, we felt VR could encourage students who were not ready to go to college to attend Deaf TRACK. Then if some students decide to stay at Kentucky Tech, great! If some students decide to attend Jefferson Community College, the University of Louisville, or any other schools in the area, great! That's part of what we we're talking about in our model of partnership. We're marketing the opportunity to go through developmental classes at Kentucky Tech's Deaf TRACK. We emphasize to students that the classes are taught by a deaf teacher that understands their language and learning style. We will work with students and VR to provide a transition to other postsecondary institutions that meet the individual's goals. We want them to at least have some fundamental "tools" before entering the educational arena they have chosen.

This program has opened up tutorial services. We have students going to Jefferson Community College that might need some additional tutorial support services, so they're coming back to Kentucky Tech to work with staff fluent in ASL and knowledgeable about Deaf education. Ken Puckett has developed the idea of dual enrollment. It only costs \$55 to send a student to get tutoring six hours a week with part-time student status. We are very fortunate that VR could activate the dual enrollment idea and get students enrolled at Jefferson Community College in their classes. They could also enroll in what we call "individual education service" with our deaf instructor to participate in tutoring services. The big selling point was that we have the interpreters, the teacher, and the counselor/coordinator who are knowledgeable in deafness and deaf education issues. I can call Luanne and say, "This student wants to attend Jefferson Community College," or contact Brenna and say, "This student wants to go to UL – let's work on what steps are necessary to get them in." But what the group would like to do now, as a new model, is to see if there's a way to get an instructor who will teach an English 101 class for deaf students, utilizing ASL. That would be a credit class that could transfer to the University of Louisville, Jefferson Community College, or other postsecondary institutions. If any of you have any information on that, we're open as to what our next step will be.

The other collaborative effort is a summer transition program at Eastern Kentucky University. This is a partnership between Kentucky Tech - Jefferson Campus, Eastern Kentucky University, and the PEC Central Office, with some assistance from other PEC affiliates and the Gallaudet Regional Center at Flagler College. Students, parents, counselors, and any one else involved in the transition from high school to postsecondary training can attend. The students work with deaf adults/deaf role models on issues they will face in college, as well as some leadership training. We split the parents and counselors up. Some of these parents have a hard time letting go and have some issues to address, so we work with the parents. Then we get counselors and teachers from some of the mainstream programs that

don't know about college programs for Deaf and hard of hearing students. That's been a wonderful partnership here. We stay in the luxurious dorms at EKU and the parents get an idea what it's like to live in a dormitory. Vocational Rehabilitation is also involved in explaining the "maze" of financial aid. We try to have all speakers who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Some of these parents have never seen a Deaf/hard of hearing person in the role of a leader or speaker. We want to expose them to the key leaders in the state of Kentucky that are Deaf or hard of hearing.

For this year, we've added *Deafness 101* that will assist administrators in trying to get some things started at their schools. Our state program administrator for VR, Patty Conway, thought this would be a good opportunity to meet with all the coordinators of the programs to discuss various issues. So every year we see a new way to create partnerships and bring people in on this program. We are utilizing money from PEC, Gallaudet, and VR in our collaborative activities. We bring in various colleges/programs throughout the state and nation to expose all participants to the opportunities that are available.

Kenneth Puckett:

I am the State Coordinator of the Deaf within VR, and I'm happy to be here with all of you today. Along with Kentucky Tech, VR has been under the Workforce Development Cabinet in the state system. I want to explain some of the legal issues and legislative actions regarding postsecondary education for deaf people that hatched in Kentucky.

Schools like Kentucky Tech continue to need money for interpreting services and other support services for deaf students. Approximately ten years ago, Vocational Rehabilitation provided Kentucky Tech with money to see how successful the project could become. It ran for several years and continued on to this day. The pilot project initially funded several interpreters, including one full-time person with benefits. Vocational Rehabilitation conducts an annual survey to see how many people used the services. In 1995-96 we found that there were several interpreters' positions at Kentucky schools that had no deaf students, and they didn't expect any more students coming in. We've been funding several full-time positions with no students needing those services, so we had to do some cutting. Due to the economic situation, we had to take serious measures and ended up cutting one of the programs.

In 1994, the Kentucky Regulatory Statute (KSR) 164.478 passed to establish a pool of money to distribute to different colleges throughout the state. This statute provides state funds for the college and universities under the Higher Education bill, however Kentucky Tech was not included in the Higher Education bill at the time. Since they couldn't access those particular funds, we provided separate funds as I explained earlier. The monies were then allocated for the Council of Higher Education and were given to VR to manage. We had \$100,000 that first year, and we've seen some small increases recently. The funds have been for the purpose of paying for interpreting and notetaking services; tutoring was not included. We had one student who attended law school who was receiving CAN (computer assisted notetaking) at the same time he was getting interpreting services. One of the recent developments is the change from higher education to postsecondary education. Other things are changing as well, and there is some concern about how these changes will affect students who are deaf. We're not sure whether the programs will continue to access these legislative monies or not, but we suspect that they will be able to do that.

In 1992 there was a bill to support or complement the other law that was established in Kentucky, to change it from higher education to postsecondary. We will now be able to fund positions at the Kentucky Tech program and other postsecondary programs. We will be able to access money for interpreting and note taking services, as necessary. A joint Senate and House committee appropriated funds and added more money to that particular pool. It's increased to \$200,000 this year to cover the increasing costs for interpreter services throughout the state. We will have \$375,000 for 1998-99, and VR is distributing that money to different colleges and universities. We will probably work with case

management positions and try to reallocate that money into locations where it is needed. But all in all, it's been working out quite fine. That's basically the history of the developments of what has happened up till now.

Pat Gleich:

In addition to being the facilitator for the session, I also sit on the advisory board of the Kentucky Tech program. To clarify what happens in our state, Kentucky Tech - Jefferson Campus is part of a state system of technical schools throughout the state. It is similar to the community college system. When we talked about systems merging, it was not just one particular campus that merged, but a change within the whole system.

When Ken talked about interpreters at schools where there were no deaf students, that occurred at some schools throughout the state. As a result, they reallocated funds throughout the state.

Ken Puckett:

Thank you, that was very helpful. We discussed some ingredients for success, and noted that we need data about the costs and expenses and evidence of the needs. We have other resources and things that we're allocating to the different colleges and universities. Kentucky Tech, the University of Louisville, and Jefferson Community Colleges are all working together with VR to identify and meet the needs of the students.

We have professional deaf leadership in Kentucky. In addition to my role in VR as the State Coordinator, we have Dr. Bobbie Beth Scoggins as the Commissioner of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services. We also have a deaf president, Dr. Harvey Corson, at the Kentucky School for the Deaf. So we have had a tremendous influx of Deaf professionals in our area, and we are working all collaboratively together. I want to impress on you the importance of this regarding the participation of major players. We realize that it's very, very important that we have this kind of collaboration with the other Deaf professionals on a regular basis.

Also, another important issue is the consensus-building process. We had several things develop that were not successful and did not involve the consensus-building process. It's very important and it takes a lot of time, but it's very vital. The support of administration is also critical. In the Kentucky Tech program, we were very fortunate to have a good relationship between their administration and the VR administration.

The Commissioner of Kentucky Division of Vocational Rehabilitation had given a lot of support to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing services throughout the years, at least for the past four or five years. It's been great. Some of those players in this collaborative effort have had some political clout, too. We've been doing some good collaboration with one another, which has been very, very important. Some of us don't want to have all the power. We haven't developed enough political savvy. We also had some active legislators that were supporting us. When we're successful, we need to review the process, go through it again, work with the people, elaborate on the idea, get feedback, and continue to plan for the future.

We feel that we're going to be integrating a successful program with all these other colleges. Thank you very much.

Question:

I'd like to make a comment and thank the representatives from the three states. I'm the State Coordinator from Virginia VR. I've been saying the same kinds of things about setting up contracts and doing regional activities. We need four coordinators and we're doing a funding pool, too. I want to thank you for sharing your models; you've recharged me so I can use you. I will be contacting you for some assistance, I'm sure, when I meet opposition in my state. So I want to thank you for sharing your models because we can take that back to our home states and use the information.

Pat Stowe:

As Oklahoma came in with this group for the presentation, we indicated that we are at an awkward stage. We really don't know what we need to do. New Jersey and Kentucky have interesting models that can help us in Oklahoma to move forward. If any of you in this seminar have had good inter-agency responses, good ways to collaborate, or unique ways to keep things going with high levels of service, let us know. We're open to any ideas you've got. That's why we're here.

Patricia Tomlinson:

I think the most important key in the whole thing is getting to know each other. I believe that if you don't get to know all the players that are involved, sit down at the table, and learn about each other – including your problems and influences – it will never happen. That's where we've had the greatest success. Josie and I have known each other for a long time in different capacities. But the ability to pick up a phone and say, “I don't understand this. Can you explain this? Let's sit down and work together,” is the biggest piece of advice I can give to anybody.

Kenneth Puckett:

Developing that type of relationship doesn't cost any money, we just get together. There's no money involved in that sort of opportunity.

Panelist:

In various degrees in all three models, there was some “legislative leverage.” As with federal funding, which may come and go, you have to look for other sources of funding. Our states do have an obligation; and speaking from my own experience, the deaf community has not been terribly visible in our state. It is important to have allies to empower the deaf community. Let the legislators know this is not a population they can ignore or forget. They have an obligation to provide funding and support for all members of their state. They can't pretend this is a group that doesn't exist because there's not many of them and they don't cause trouble.

So if you are Deaf, be empowered. If you are hearing, work as an ally and let the legislation know this is a group that will be reckoned with. They can't continue to pretend they don't exist anymore.

Panelist:

When VR said they were going to withdraw their funding, I didn't become the director of the program until it was the final year of the process. This kind of approach is so important. Going into negotiations in an antagonistic manner, arguing, and saying what you can't do this isn't going to get you anywhere. You really need to maintain your relationship with that agency, try to find common ground, and try to really work things out in a positive way. But if you start saying, “You owe me this and you have to do this,” you're not going to get anywhere. But it's how can we work together to benefit the students that is important.

Panelist:

I think that's true because we talked at critical times, and I knew the administration's point of view on things. I knew that it would be a waste of energy to try to extend the interpreter contract because I knew it wouldn't happen. Don't waste your time doing things that won't happen, and don't antagonize anybody at the same point.

Question:

When they eliminated your contracts in Oklahoma, was that solely because of an interpretation of ADA? You were talking about resources; overall, VR resources have not gone down in federal level. I wasn't clear why they eliminated services.

Judy Fox-Goodrich:

I'm from VR in Oklahoma. Basically we were at a point where we were not able to payroll the following month in terms of having so much expenditure, mostly on medical services and physical restoration services. Our administration started looking at contracts and indicating areas where contracts were established before Section 504 came into effect. We never evaluated whether we should continue this practice, and began looking at canceling contracts. I was only able to negotiate a four-year phase out. This helped a little bit in the sense that it wasn't having \$150,000 this year and nothing the next year. It's probably better to take a 25 percent reduction over a 4-year period to phase that out.

I think there's still some room within our agency for negotiation. We're basically going back to a point where we're starting from scratch. We're trying to determine what kind of VR support we can come up with that's fair to everybody. We're still under an order of selection. We still have numerous folks applying for services that can't receive them because they are not in priority groups 1 or 2.

Don Hastings:

I think it is important to recognize that the relationship might need to be redefined. If interpreter services cannot be supported, are there other projects or unmet needs that can be addressed? The collaboration in New Jersey was an example of that.

Judy Fox-Goodrich:

There was a really good session that some of you may have gone to on the work-ability program at Ohlone College in California. One of the issues is that we all have to understand each other's mission. Vocational Rehabilitation's mission is not to educate the individual. While that may be higher education's mission, our mission is employability. So whatever product higher education can put together that more directly addresses our mission of employment, that's easier to sell to a VR administration. We're looking at things where we need some more middle ground, such as services like transition counseling. I think that's really what the collaborative effort has to focus on.

Question:

I'm from Utah. One of the things that concerns me with VR is they paid for tuition; and even though they require students to apply for a Pell grant, they always allow them to use it for other expenses. They often don't pay for disability related services – not just interpreting services, but other kinds of disability related services. To me, that seems like double funding. What we've been told by VR is that when they stop paying for interpreter services, they will just pay for more tuition for more students to come, which means we will have more students to serve.

My point is that the Pell grant is for educational purposes to pay for tuition, books, et cetera, and that's at least one of the sources. It just makes sense to me that if you are limited in your funds for disability purposes, that they be put toward disability services.

Patricia Tomlinson:

The bottom line is the person should not be denied the service they need to become employable. I don't know how that's balanced, but they should not be denied a service based upon whether they get a Pell grant or not.

Judy Fox-Goodrich:

Here's something I'm curious about. In this hotel, for example, there are a number of rooms that are accessible, but undoubtedly cost more for the hotel to provide those specialized rooms. Everyone that stays in the hotel pays the same room rate, and they don't charge additional fees for those specialized rooms. I've been curious if any states have looked at developing a pool for disability services with a surcharge per credit hour or something like that. It seems like a creative way to approach it to me and I was curious if anybody explored that.

Participant:

I want to throw in a totally subjective comment to what you just said. In our approach to dealing with people who can provide us resources, we really cut ourselves short if we look at services that are provided such as interpreters, and even other accessibility services, mobility services, as only benefiting the person who appears to be the direct recipient. An interpreter in a classroom interprets for everyone in that classroom. An elevator, available for a wheelchair user, allows that person to be in a classroom and share her experiences with everyone else in there, but other individuals also use that elevator. If we only look at the direct beneficiary of the services as being the individual whose case we are dealing with, then it does seem very expensive. But when you think about what that person can contribute and that the funding then enables them to be there, then it doesn't seem so expensive for any one individual. I think we have to educate people like that.

Patricia Tomlinson:

I think we also need a broad spectrum of individuals that are employed at every institution. Because we tend to look only at the students, we need to step back and look at all the people we work with, too. A tremendous impact can be had by asking those people to get involved in the issues that face them, and not only the students. So you are absolutely right. It's everybody that's involved.

Pat Gleich:

Listening to the three different models, we also heard three different approaches. As we consider how to bring resources to our programs and how to continue to grow and expand our programs, I think we probably all find ourselves working with a combination of those different approaches.

In Oklahoma, obviously they needed an approach that basically said, "All right, you have a legal obligation to do this. We're going to get the people around the table who need to be there so we fully understand the legal obligation VR has or other agencies have to provide funding." The New Jersey model, particularly after looking at their history, was based on a requirement of what must be done. It also brought in collaboration in terms of using an assessment to determine how those resources should be divided and where those services should be put.

In Kentucky, only a model that uses a collaborative approach could function well. While you can tell people that they're legally obligated and they'll tell you why they're not, you would spend all your time arguing. But by figuring out ways you can share resources and collaborate, you will find ways that will work, and you will get more efficient use of the resources you have.

Thank you very much for participating in this panel. It offered us some insight into ways of working within an ever-changing system.

Editor's note:

Camden County College is the Northeast Technical Assistance Center (NETAC) state site for New Jersey. Kentucky Tech - Jefferson Campus (recently re-named Jefferson Technical College) and Tulsa Community College are affiliates of the Postsecondary Education Consortium (PEC).