

“CONNECTIONS”: Vocational Rehabilitation and Higher Education Jointly Serving Consumers Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

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What is “Connections”?

“CONNECTIONS” is a half-day interactive workshop program that explains and nurtures team building between higher education staff members, vocational rehabilitation (VR) personnel, and college students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

“CONNECTIONS” is intended to be used by VR in conjunction with postsecondary education programs that already serve students with hearing loss, and who have some experience with issues related to communication accommodation- and those programs that are interested in beginning to serve such students.

“Connections” Workshop Objectives:

- To provide a clear understanding of VR philosophy, eligibility criteria, and services.
- To provide experience in using communication accommodations.
- To identify issues or problems in coordination of services for VR-sponsored students.
- To identify training needed by postsecondary education staff and VR staff.
- To develop a postsecondary education/VR cooperative working relationship that will result in optimal services for VR sponsored students who have hearing loss.

The “CONNECTIONS” training package includes:

- A detailed trainer’s manual;
- Transparency masters of key points that are made in the trainer notes;
- Masters of handouts for workshop participants;
- Masters of registration forms, sign-in sheets, pre-test, evaluation forms.

The Workshop content covers:

- VR’s history, philosophy, eligibility criteria, and services;
- How to make the right decisions regarding communication access;

- Issues and problems that arise in “dual service coordination” of VR sponsored students attending postsecondary education programs;
- Ways to improve working relationships between postsecondary education and VR.

An overview of the “CONNECTIONS” workshop package was presented. The overview included: explaining why it was developed, for whom it is appropriate, how the materials are intended to be used, and how to secure the workshop package from the NETAC Clearing House at no cost*.

Workshop materials, which include: an introduction to the training, workshop preparation, trainer’s notes, transparency masters, handout masters, and video tape, were displayed. The two-part “Connections” videotape was shown, and tips for its use were given. Part 1 covers the history of VR since its inception, through the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992. Part 2 is presented in 5 segments in which students, VR staff and postsecondary staff who work in programs serving deaf and hard of hearing students were interviewed. Video Part 2 is designed to be stopped at key points at which time interactive discussion takes place on a variety of topics of concern to VR/Higher education staff, such as: economic needs tests; financial caps; financial aid; out of state sponsorship; paperwork coordination; communication access coordination and funding; confidentiality laws; student responsibilities in record sharing; informed choice; VR’s employment outcome focus.

Attendees were encouraged to secure the workshop materials and to use them to follow up with workshops on a local level in their individual states to develop a team approach to service coordination that ensures maximized student inclusion and optimal educational and employment outcomes.

**Request “Connections” Workshop Materials #1084 from the PEPNet Resource Center, National Center on Deafness, California State University, Northridge, 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330-8267 or <http://prc.csun.edu/> or (888)684-4695 (V/TTY; (818) 677-4899 (fax).*