

VR4 Hearing Loss

Everything You Want to Hear

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Objectives

Increase knowledge and understanding about the impact of hearing loss among the wide range of individuals who are hard of hearing and late deafened and examine how this affects vocational rehabilitation service delivery to these consumers.

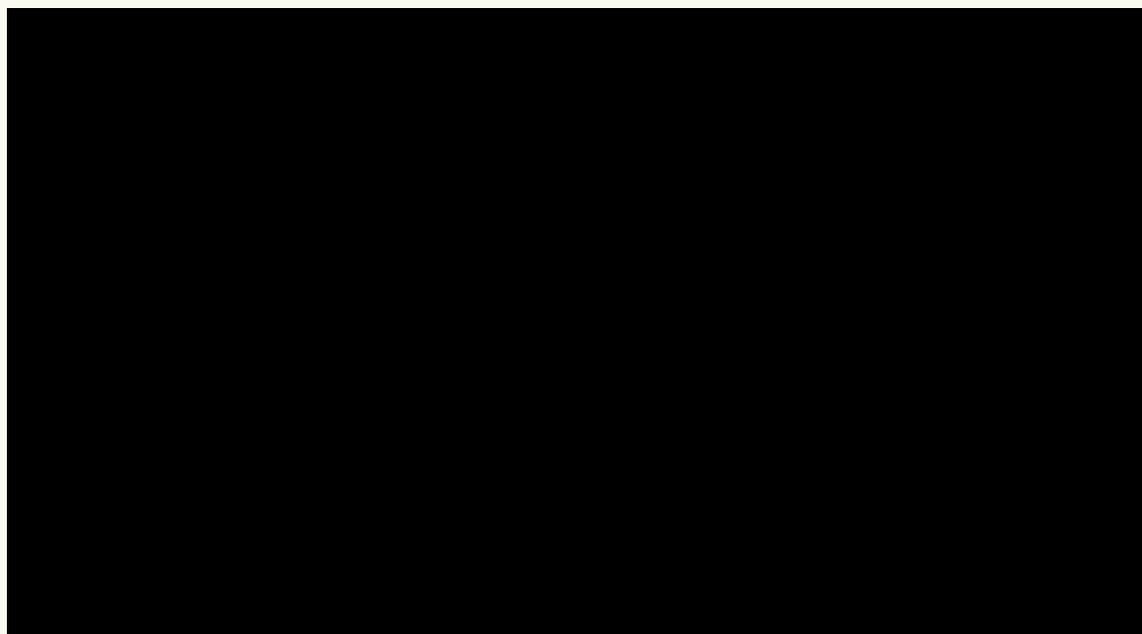
Identify and address the unique communication functioning of individual consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened to establish an effective counseling relationship.

Increase skills in functional assessment, eligibility determination, order of selection priority category, and employment planning with consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened.

Improve counseling and guidance skills with consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened to address issues regarding the hearing loss and its' impact on employment.

Increase awareness of employment problems to provide job accommodations or other solutions for consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened, especially those who experience progressive hearing loss.

How



How can vocational rehabilitation professionals appropriately prepare to serve consumers with hearing loss? Explore this module to walk through the entire vocational rehabilitation process from referral to closure and post-employment. This module explains the unique issues and needs of these consumer populations with special emphasis on communication.

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1 – The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Every time a vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor begins to work with a new consumer, he or she becomes a member of a new team, forming relationships and assuming new roles. When counselors work with individuals who are hard of hearing or late deafened they face unique challenges in building relationships.

In developing the counselor-consumer relationship, communication factors are crucial. In developing relationships with other professionals involved with the case, often both parties will need to overcome misunderstandings and misconceptions. The counselor's partnership with an individual with a hearing disability is a role that requires specific knowledge, skills and abilities. As in working with any underserved population, this role may, at times feel a bit like playing "The Lone Ranger."

Building Effective Relationships

What can the VR counselor do to develop effective relationships and optimal conditions for working with a consumer who is hard of hearing or late deafened? Here are a number of points for counselors to consider:

Every person has the choice to be responsible for their own actions and reactions.

Every person has a circle of influence – those things that are within their control.

Behavior reflects personal beliefs and principles.

Every person can change those things within their circle of influence if they choose.

At times counselors feel they are powerless to make a difference within the bureaucracy. They often fail to recognize and separate those things over which they have control from those over which they have none. In working with individuals who are hard of hearing or late deafened, some of the most important things to do to make a difference cost nothing and are simply a matter of making a personal choice to behave in a particular way. The following are some of those little things that can make a huge difference:

Communicate – Find out with the consumer what will work to best understand each other and follow the [guidelines for effective communication](#).

Communicate – Let supervisors and administrators know if consumers need accommodations to access the office.

Communicate – Share information with consumers about their options, whether discussing coping strategies, technology, service providers or employment options.

Communicate – Let consumers know where they stand in the VR process. Be very clear about expectations of each other.

Communicate – Sometimes the most valuable service to a consumer is one that costs nothing. Information is power.

Communicate – Counselors should ask for the kind of information that is needed from a vendor. Remember that the counselor is paying for a service and should purchase what they need, not just what the vendor

chooses to give.

Getting Started – Self-Analysis Questionnaire

Answer the following questions honestly. Rate each question on the following scale:

5=Always; 4=Often; 3=Sometimes; 2=Seldom; 1=Never

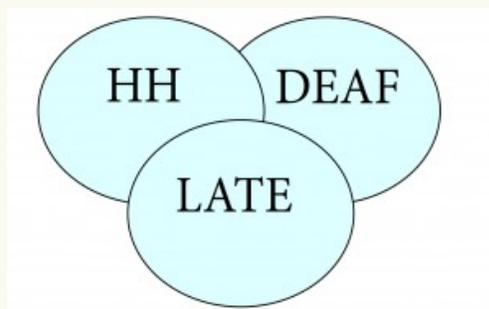
- ___ 1. I often provide consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened with services other than a hearing aid.
- ___ 2. A high percentage of my consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened require assistance with job placement.
- ___ 3. I often do a job site/task analysis to determine my consumer's need for job accommodation/modification/ hearing assistive technology (HAT).
- ___ 4. I am familiar with hearing assistive technology, including assistive listening devices (ALDs), from which my consumers may be able to benefit.
- ___ 5. I explore possible existing job problems with consumers who come to VR already employed and requesting a hearing aid.
- ___ 6. I explore the extent to which my consumers who are hard of hearing and late deafened have accepted their hearing loss and how well they are coping with their personal and work environments.
- ___ 7. Our VR office is equipped with a personal amplification device or listening system (loop, FM, etc.) to encourage full participation of consumers and staff who are hard of hearing in one on one and in group situations.
- ___ 8. I discuss communication with my consumers who are hard of hearing and late deafened and make appropriate adjustments to accommodate their preferred style, mode or needs.
- ___ 9. I frequently check to be certain I am being understood completely by my consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened.
- ___ 10. I assist work supervisors and work peers in facilitating effective communication with my consumers who are hard of hearing and late deafened.
- ___ 11. I provide counseling to my consumers regarding hearing aid expectations – prior to providing them.
- ___ 12. I explore the need for aural rehabilitation services.
- ___ 13. I counsel my consumers in techniques for handling stress and coping with people and situations made difficult by their hearing loss.
- ___ 14. I sometimes provide hearing aid replacements as post-employment services.

Misconceptions Regarding Services for Consumers

1. Hearing loss occurs on a continuum from most severe (persons with no useable hearing, who do not benefit from amplification) to least severe (mild hearing loss). If I can work successfully with people with the most severe loss, I can then work well with people with less severe hearing losses.

Rather than thinking of hearing loss as occurring along a continuum from most to least severe, it is more

profitable to think in terms of different groups of people, each with their unique set of problems and unique solutions. Each group will require different service strategies. Ability to work with one group does not guarantee ability to work effectively with the others.



Think in terms of three main groupings of people who are hearing impaired: culturally Deaf, late-deafened and hard of hearing. A diagram of these groups would show three overlapping circles in which the areas included in the overlap indicate shared problems related to hearing loss. The areas that do not overlap indicate issues and problems unique to each group. Working with each of these groups requires unique training and experience. Skill in working with one group will probably not transfer to the unique problems of the others.

2. People who are hard of hearing and late deafened can identify their employment related problems.

Most people who are hard of hearing and late deafened are isolated from other people who have similar problems. They tend to minimize and/or hide their hearing loss, especially on the job. They are usually not in a position to learn about the nuances of hearing loss nor the technology and other supports available to help them to cope with their diminished ability to hear. The counselor cannot assume that consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened know that personal or employment problems may be resultant of hearing loss related stresses. Counselors must know what questions to ask to elicit this information, and must know the full range of services that are available to modify the behavior, situation or environment.

3. People who are hard of hearing and late deafened know what hearing assistive technologies, including assistive listening devices, are available.

For the same reasons as stated above, in addition to the rapidly changing technology, most people who are hard of hearing and late deafened are not aware of the wide range of available hearing assistive technology that might help them. Even if they are familiar with assistive listening devices, they may not understand that they could benefit from them.

4. People who are hard of hearing know how to use hearing aids, assistive listening devices and other hearing assistive technology.

Any kind of new technology is threatening to new users until they become comfortable with its use. User manuals are often complicated and not easily understood. Few vendors provide counseling concerning the expected benefit the individual will receive. Many hearing aids and assistive listening devices are therefore purchased and not used at all, or, if used, not to the fullest benefit to the individual.

5. If the counselor understands the consumer who has a hearing loss, the consumer can also understand the counselor.

Many people who are hard of hearing or late deafened, especially those with adult onset hearing loss, have very clear speech because the ability to speak was developed while they could still clearly monitor their own voice. Many people who are hard of hearing retain enough hearing to still be able to do this. It does not mean, however, that they are able to, through their ears, understand all or even much that a counselor is saying to them. It also does not mean that the consumer necessarily has a mild hearing loss. Many persons with severe hearing loss acquired later in life retain the ability to produce understandable speech. The counselor will need to initially discuss with the consumer how he or she communicates best with the counselor and make

appropriate adaptations. In some cases an assistive listening device, such as an FM system or an induction loop, or writing (possibly on a computer) may be the consumer's preference.

6. Vocational Rehabilitation generally meets the needs of consumers who are hard of hearing.

Audits and other studies indicate that the primary service being provided to consumers who are hard of hearing is assistance in the purchase of a hearing aid. These cases come under fire because the consumer appears to only need a hearing aid, with no need for counseling or other services to be able to continue in employment. The consumer therefore appears not to be "significantly disabled", and not in need of "substantial VR services". Some of these cases are replacement hearing aid cases that have been previously served, and may have been better served under "post-employment services." It is likely that many others are first-time hearing aid users who are in need of pre – and post- hearing aid provision counseling regarding hearing aid expectations and use on and off the job. It is also probable that personal and employment accommodations have not been explored, identified and dealt with and that many of these "easy hearing aid cases" were actually functionally significantly disabled, but not recognized as such.

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2 – Communication Specialist (CS) – Rehabilitation Counselor for the Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened (RC/HH/LD)

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor as “Communication Specialist”

Public awareness, growth of consumer groups, legislation, technological advances, etc., are bringing people who are hard of hearing and late deafened “out of the closet” in order to take advantage of needed communication enhancements now available to them. However, many do not know specifically what is available, what is suited to their needs, or how to access and use these devices.

There is currently no designated professional to whom hard of hearing individuals can turn who has the expertise to help them with job site analysis, job site modifications or restructuring of job tasks that might be required for successful employment performance. They have no one to turn to for help with employer and co-worker education and technical assistance. They have no one to turn to for help with hearing loss related stress and associated coping strategies, self-image and assertiveness training. They need help in locating support groups and other personal resources. The vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor is the logical professional to pick up this service void.

The structures of staff who serve persons with hearing loss vary in different VR state agencies. Consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened are often served by counselors from different caseload backgrounds and various skill levels related to these populations. States that have specialized counselors serving consumers who are hard of hearing and late deafened are commonly called Rehabilitation Counselor for the Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened (RC/HH/LD) or in some states Communication Specialist (CS). *The 2008 Model State Plan (MSP) for Vocational Rehabilitation Services to Persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened (MSP)* recognizes that not all counselors have the competencies needed to serve persons with all levels of hearing loss. The MSP identifies the essential functions of the counselor assigned to work with individuals who are hard of hearing and late deafened and documents the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to effectively serve this population.

Through enhancement of vocational rehabilitation counselor knowledge, truly eligible individuals who are hard of hearing and late deafened with previously unidentified substantial limitations and who are in need of multiple vocational rehabilitation services, can be identified and served as a group separate from those who only need a hearing aid. If VR counselors effectively communicate with these consumers and understand the scope of their potential employment problems and possible solutions and remediation, it will be apparent this is not typically a “single service hearing aid” population of need.

The Counseling Relationship

Counseling and guidance are critical components throughout the VR process. Counseling with an individual who is hard of hearing or late deafened requires a repertoire of communication skills, knowledge of alternate methods for communication access and ability to adjust to specific needs and preferences. For this reason VR counselors who work with consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened must become communication specialists.

No other rehabilitation professional currently assumes the role of communication specialist. VR counselors must be able to gather information from other professionals, from the consumer, from the employer, family and friends and be able to put it all together with the consumer to determine communication and other service needs.

With all VR counseling, effective communication skills form the core of the counselor/consumer relationship. The ability to listen, reflect, paraphrase and clarify are essential elements. These elements take on even greater importance when hearing loss is involved.

Counselors assigned to work with consumers who are hard of hearing and late deafened must have knowledge of a menu of communication services that can match the employment needs of the individual consumer. In assessment of service needs, counselors should not only gather medical information, but should additionally:

- Assess communication problems in general and on the job and recognize which problems are related to the individual's hearing loss

- Know what hearing assistive technology aids and devices are available and know how to determine which are the most beneficial to the consumer

- Be able to do a job site analysis and recommend modifications

- Be able to assist the consumer and job supervisor to prevent or reduce communication problems

- Counsel consumers in needed coping strategies and techniques

- Refer the consumer to appropriate community resources who have knowledge of communication access for individuals with hearing loss

The counselor who is an effective communication specialist will apply the above measures to his or her own interactions with the consumer, model the appropriate communication behaviors, and take advantage of the unique position of the VR counselor to share this information with the consumer and others involved in the individual's rehabilitation program.

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3 – Referral and Application

Referral: Identifying the Consumer Who is Hard of Hearing or Late Deafened

Individuals who are hard of hearing or late deafened, and who may benefit from the provision of VR services, are not always easy to find. This may be due to the following:

Many students who are hard of hearing are not “classified” or identified through the Special Education system.

A person who is hard of hearing or late deafened may hide the hearing loss because of fear of loss of job, friendships, etc.

A person who is hard of hearing or late deafened may not realize that his or her employment problems, i.e. stress, fatigue, etc., are a result of the hearing loss.

A person who is hard of hearing or late deafened may not know that there are ways that he or she can be helped.

A person who is hard of hearing or late deafened may not know about VR services that could be available to them beyond hearing aid provision.

Few medical, social, educational or other rehabilitation professionals are trained to recognize and understand the impediments that can stem from hearing disability and therefore fail to refer.

Many physicians and other professionals do not know about VR and tell persons who are hard of hearing or late deafened, “You just have to live with it. There is nothing you can do.”

Persons who are hard of hearing or late deafened may not admit or acknowledge their loss due to their own or others preconceived ideas about the stigma of hearing loss.

It is important to note that hearing loss is a potential unidentified secondary disability in persons seeking or already receiving VR services for other disabling conditions. The VR counselor should therefore observe and be aware of communication behavior in all consumers, regardless of presenting disability. When a hearing loss is identified as an additional disability, the VR counselor may discover that the communication and other functional limitations will warrant that this becomes the major disability affecting functional capacity and employment. Regardless of major disability designation, it is important that the consumer who is hard of hearing or late deafened be served by a VR counselor skilled and knowledgeable about the hearing disability.

The following is a list of major indicators that hearing loss may be present. When a person exhibits several of these behavioral signs, it is quite likely that an audiological evaluation will reveal a hearing problem. The signs and symptoms will vary from person to person depending upon the degree and type of hearing loss and the nature of the communication situation.

Frequently misunderstanding words, i.e. “wash” for “watch”

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Asking people to repeat often

Responding inappropriately to what is said

Exhibiting an inability to understand in group situations

Having difficulty understanding on the telephone

Intently watching the speaker's mouth

Blaming people for not speaking clearly

Becoming defensive about communication problems

Turning the head to one side to hear what is said

Showing strained alertness around the eyes

Wearing a puzzled expression

Using a loud voice when speaking

Speaking barely audible

Avoiding social situations

Turning the television or radio volume too high

Smiling and pretending to understand what is said when it is obvious he or she did not understand

Relying on significant others or family members to answer questions or respond in communication situations

Referral Development

Transition Services

VR agencies should promote outreach to all students with hearing loss in secondary school programs, those being served under an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan, as well as those without any special identification in the education system. Many states have transition programs and counselors who are the point of contact with the school to the VR system. These transition counselors must be trained to recognize the hard of hearing students who have not self-identified and have not been identified by the school, and therefore are falling through the cracks. The transition counselor should transfer the hard of hearing or late deafened referrals to Rehabilitation Counselors for the Hard of Hearing/Late Deafened (RC/HH/LD) or "communication specialists" if such a position exists. If they retain these students in their caseload, they should be trained in related communication and other issues needed to appropriately serve these students.

The Currently Employed Applicant

It is important to note that consumers who experience adult onset hearing loss often have been employed for a number of years before problems on the job due to the hearing loss reach a "crisis" point and timely and effective intervention is needed to maintain employment. If the VR counselor can reach the employee who is hard of hearing and having difficulties as soon as possible and expedite the application process, services may be provided to enable the consumer to keep the job. This result is preferable to having the individual lose the job and then being referred to VR to start from square-one to obtain employment.

Referral Sources

Following are some potential sources of appropriate referrals that the counselor should consider, cultivate and educate to the services that might be available for potential consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened. These programs may or may not be aware of underlying/hidden secondary or other disabilities of hearing loss in consumers they serve.

Secondary schools: hearing disabled and mainstream programs and teachers, guidance counselors, nurses, and school audiologists

Postsecondary schools and programs: faculty, other instructors, staff and student access center personnel

Health care agencies/programs, including physicians, nurses, audiologists, speech/language pathologists, hospitals/clinics, and mental health centers

Hearing aid and assistive technology dispensers

Community service centers that serve individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing

WIA one-stop career centers

Independent living centers and community rehabilitation centers that serve individuals with all types of disabilities

Employers, human resource personnel and employee assistance programs (acquired hearing loss often occurs in adults who are currently employed and begin experiencing problems on the job requiring VR assistance to maintain employment)

Unions, state employment agencies and other work related organizations

Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) and the Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA) national organizations and local chapters

Civic organizations

State commissions for deaf and hard of hearing

Current and former VR consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened

Professional groups such as state chapters of the Speech, Language and Hearing Association and state chapters of hearing aid dispensers

Application and Assessment for VR Services

The Initial Interview

The initial interview is crucial in gathering data and information to document the presence of the hearing loss on which eligibility will be based. At this time the counselor can learn what existing medical and other evaluations are available and determine if additional evaluations will need to be authorized to make a timely eligibility decision.

To establish an effective counseling relationship, the counselor and consumer together must immediately determine the communication strategies that work best for each to be understood. In some cases, the consumer will be aware of his or her needs. In other cases, the counselor may need to identify **communication problems** and model effective communications methods.

At the time of the initial interview, steps must be taken to reduce both consumer and counselor anxiety. The counselor must establish credibility by demonstrating sensitivity to and knowledge about hearing disability and how it can impact the overall functioning of an individual.

The counselor should begin by addressing communication needs of the individual, making sure to put the person at ease about expressing his or her specific communication preferences and needs and the counselor's willingness to accommodate these needs.

The counselor should follow **guidelines for effective communication**.

Since assessment of need and provision of rehabilitation technology is required throughout the vocational rehabilitation process, the counselor should have basic assistive listening devices and other technology available for the consumer to use, i.e. pocket talker, FM systems, laptop computer for typing, etc.

Communication strategies should be utilized as needed, i.e. having the consumer repeat back important information to ensure understanding.

The counselor should instill confidence in the consumer that the counselor is knowledgeable about hearing disability, especially as it relates to employment issues.

The counselor needs to be sure that the individual has an understanding of the goals and functions of the VR agency, and should give an overview of potential services available to individuals with hearing disabilities, i.e. provision of assistive listening devices (ALDs) to assist in training and on the job.

The counselor must interview the consumer in depth to establish what services are being sought and to determine if there may be other services in lieu of or in addition to those requested that could be of employment benefit to the consumer.

The counselor must conduct a thorough inventory of the individual's disability – including etiology, emotional and functional impact of the hearing disability on the consumer, as well as the perceived impact on individuals who are in frequent contact with the consumer.

The counselor must consider the overall needs of the applicant in the different stages of employment: preparation (transitioning, training, retraining); job/search/placement; job accommodations; and maintenance of employment.

Documentation of Disability

The Rehab Act mandate to make eligibility decisions quickly – and to the extent possible, using existing information – makes it essential that the counselor determine specifically what information must be accessed in order to make a fair appraisal of the severity of the employment impediment and the substantiality of services the consumer needs. It is therefore extremely important that the counselor knows what to look for and what questions to ask.

The importance of the initial interview cannot be understated. This is when the counselor/ consumer relationship is established and when the counselor gets a feel for the consumer's:

- Nature and level of hearing loss

- Expressive and receptive communication ability

- Communication mode preference

- Communication functioning in various environments, such as one-to-one, small and large groups, telephone, classrooms, social environments and home surroundings

- Family, work and social relationships

- Cultural affiliations

- Knowledge of hearing assistive technology and abilities for using technology

- Knowledge of, and acceptance of, their hearing disability

- Insight into physical and psychological ramifications of the hearing loss

- Insight into impacts of hearing to the job and associated environmental solutions

- Attitudes toward self-advocacy

- Knowledge of self-help groups

- Levels of support and understanding from family and significant others

Additional formalized instruments may be helpful if the consumer is unaware and/or unable to express specifically how the disability affects the various aspects of their life. Structured questions can be valuable tools for opening the consumer's eyes to what is actually happening in everyday life activities as a result of problems with the hearing loss and will provide substantial information to the counselor about functional limitations.

Formalized [assessment tools](#) are also available for this purpose.

Preventing an Unnecessary/Premature Closure

Having at least one assigned person in each VR office who is trained in the vocational rehabilitation of hard of hearing or late deafened individuals, who has associated communication skills and available hearing assistive technology (HAT), will encourage these individuals to work with the VR agency toward successful rehabilitation.

Some of the reasons consumers who are hard of hearing and late deafened fail to follow through with services include:

Unsuccessful communication – frustration because he or she cannot understand the counselor

Misunderstood directions for application, counseling and follow-up appointments

False expectations of what the counselor/VR agency can provide

Lack of agreement with the counselor/decision and/or recommendations

Lack of firm commitment from the consumer for follow through with appointments because consumer does not fully understand the need for the appointment

Lack of feeling of partnership and choice in planning

Fear that employer will be informed and/or unaccepting of hearing disability

Lack of understanding on the part of the consumer regarding the overall impact of his or her hearing disability

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4 – Eligibility, Significance of Disability and Order of Selection for Services

Eligibility

An individual with a disability under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 amendments of 1998 means any individual, who has a physical or mental impairment which for such individual constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment; who can benefit in terms of employment outcome from vocational rehabilitation (VR) services.

The Order of Selection for Services (OSS)

If a VR agency cannot serve all eligible consumers, they must by law enter into an Order of Selection for Services, under which consumers who are determined to be the most significantly disabled must be served before other eligible consumers.

As an agency moves into an Order of Selection for Services, there is concern about where consumers who are hard of hearing and late deafened fall on the Order of Selection priority list. In recent years, VR agencies have shifted from dependence primarily on medical or audiological criteria to increased reliance on functional limitations for purposes of determining eligibility and order of selection. Consumers who are hard of hearing and late deafened are often mistakenly viewed as “single service” hearing aid cases and excluded because their functional limitations and accompanying service needs are not recognized or addressed. Functional impediments to employment of individuals who are hard of hearing or late deafened can be significant and vocationally debilitating and they may have little correlation to the level of their decibel loss.

Significance of Disability

An individual with a significant disability means an individual who has a severe physical or mental impairment that seriously limits one or more functional capacities, i.e. mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance or work skills, in terms of an employment outcome; whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time; and who has one or more resulting physical or mental disabilities causing substantial functional limitation.

Many times the mandate to serve consumers who are significantly disabled before other eligible consumers is incorrectly interpreted to mean that only persons who are deaf and use sign language qualify as significantly disabled (SD) or most significantly disabled (MSD) under an Order of Selection — this is a misnomer. The functional limitations of each applicant must be accurately identified and considered, instead of automatically assuming individuals who are deaf are more significantly disabled than individuals who are hard of hearing or late deafened.

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The importance of looking at the functional limitations of the individual with a hearing loss rather than focusing on the degree or decibel of hearing loss in determining disability and significance of disability becomes clearer if we apply the foregoing definitions to hypothetical consumers.

Example:

Ms. A has had an 80 dB hearing loss all of her life, which is considered to be a severe to profound hearing by audiological standards. Ms. A has a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, is a certified rehabilitation counselor, and has five years of work experience in her field. She uses two hearing aids, a wide range of hearing assistive technology (HAT), and is assertive about her communication and accommodation needs.

Mr. B has a moderate hearing loss as measured on a recent audiogram. He has a 35 dB loss in one ear and a 65 dB loss in the other. He feels he has acquired this hearing loss over time as an adult but does not know exactly when it started. Mr. B is a sales representative for a local firm and communication is an important part of his job. He knows he is having more difficulty communicating with people, especially on his cell phone, in meetings and in noisy situations but is trying to "get by" although he is exhausted at the end of the day. He complains that traveling for his job has also become a headache because he cannot understand public address systems or communicate in public transportation facilities and has missed connections and announcements. He is reluctant to try hearing aids for a variety of reasons and does not have the slightest idea that assistive listening devices (ALDs) exist. Mr. B is in serious jeopardy of losing his job when his employer insists that he have a medical check-up. His hearing loss is verified by an audiologist who recommends hearing aids. Mr. B does not follow through, continuing to deny that he needs hearing aids or any assistance with his hearing disability. He feels sad most of the time, loses interest in many activities and sleeps a lot when not at work.

Which of these individuals is more significantly limited by the hearing disability?

We have Ms. A, who has a severe degree of hearing loss based on audiological standards. However, with the use of her hearing aids, assistive listening devices and other technology, communication strategies and willingness to let people know about her specific communication requirements, she will generally be able to function more easily and effectively in communication situations than Mr. B. Her awareness and acceptance of the hearing loss and how it impacts on her physical and emotional well-being allows her to cope in most situations. Through her knowledge, attitude and actions, Ms. A finds her severe hearing loss to present a minimal impediment in her career, personal life and community activities.

Mr. B's level of hearing loss is not deemed to be as severe as Ms. A's in audiological terms. However, his moderate hearing impairment clearly is causing him a great deal of distress and perhaps the loss of his job as well as future jobs if he does not recognize, adjust to and accommodate his disability. He is disabled not only by his communication difficulties, but also by his inability to cope with the added stresses that accompany hearing disability, resulting in strained interpersonal relationships at work, home and in the community.

At this time, Ms. A is not experiencing functional limitations due to her hearing loss in any areas of major life functions. Ms. A would not be considered significantly disabled.

However, Mr. B is experiencing major life functional limitations with his moderate degree of hearing loss in the areas of:

Mobility – He is unable to readily utilize public transportation, hotel lodging accommodations and off site business offices and meeting rooms needed for work activities out of town.

Communication – He is unable to communicate effectively one-on-one, in group settings, and in noisy situations on the job and in social settings; and he experiences much difficulty with office line telephones and some cell phone communication.

Interpersonal Skills – He bluffs in social and group situations, trying to "get by" with his hearing loss, denies any problems and is reluctant to use amplification and/or ALDs preventing his effective interaction and participation with others.

Services needed to address Mr. B's functional limitations are:

Rehabilitation technology assessment and assistive devices – After providing assistance for Mr. B to identify and obtain appropriate hearing aids, he will need to be introduced to the vast array of hearing assistive technology available. Technological devices should be explored and selected to deal with identified alerting and communication problems. Mr. B. will need instruction in using the hearing assistive technology, including how some devices interface with his hearing aids, to better meet his needs.

Counseling and guidance – Regular sessions with the Rehabilitation Counselor for Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened (RC/HH/LD) or communication specialist to provide information and support as Mr. B confronts his hearing loss problems and begins to use technology and other strategies; the Rehabilitation Counselor for Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened (RC/HH/LD) or communication specialist will need to address his questions, problems and provide technical assistance.

Mental health assessment – To determine if therapy is indicated to address stress, grief/loss, relationship issues and depression.

Job analysis, job site analysis, job accommodations – Review of Mr. B's essential job functions and all work environments to determine what modifications and/or accommodations, employer and co-worker education are possible.

Other services that may be needed or indicated could be coping skills and support groups; aural rehabilitation; and relaxation training and are discussed later in the Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE) section of this module.

There are many consumers who are hard of hearing similar to Mr. B who would be considered to have a significant disability if, in fact, all of their problems and needs for services were recognized and dealt with by the VR counselor. It is therefore critical that the VR counselor of the consumer who is hard of hearing or late deafened be able to recognize the variety of functional limitations in the categories of major life activities, i.e. communication, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, etc., that impact the consumer's employability, plus the multiple services over an extended period of time that should be provided to address these limitations.

Functional capacities with examples of symptoms/limitations and possible impact:

FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY	SYMPTOM/LIMITATION	POSSIBLE IMPACT
Mobility	Impaired balance or motor coordination; Unable to hear wake up and safety alarms in public places; Unable to hear public address systems; Unable to converse while walking driving or otherwise moving	Unable to travel readily; Difficulty utilizing public accommodations – hotels etc.; Unable to use public transportation unassisted
Communication	Difficulty understanding verbal instructions; Difficulty understanding on telephones radios pagers; Difficulty hearing and understanding in 1 – 1 situations & groups	Makes mistakes and errors in personal business and at work; Misses important information; Cannot participate effectively in meetings
Self Care	Family members or others make phone calls schedule appts. respond to questions; Difficulty being alerted to environmental sounds such as phone alarm doorbells etc.	Cannot conduct personal business independently; Dependent on others to wake up and be aware of surroundings
Self Direction	Unable to identify communication problems and solutions	Dependent on others to plan initiate organize and carry out goal directed activities
Interpersonal Skills	Difficulty understanding & participating in groups	Exhibits social isolation & withdrawal; Fails to understand obvious social cues
Work Tolerance	Unable to perform job functions related to telephones radios paging etc.	Requires accommodations in essential job functions
Work Skills	Unable to hear warning sounds and alarms at	Cannot safely complete all job

Information and Referral Services and Wait Lists

For state VR agencies operating under an Order of Selection for Services, some individuals who are determined eligible for services based on their hearing disability will be placed on a wait list due to their determined priority category. The Rehabilitation Act provides that eligible individuals who do not meet the Order of Selection criteria shall have access to an information and referral system adequate to ensure provision of accurate information in appropriate modes of communication to assist them with their employment needs. This may include referrals to other Federal and state programs including other components of the statewide workforce investment system. These may be one-stop career centers, state employment agencies, or local specialized programs that can be utilized in the absence of VR services such as speech and hearing centers and other related community service centers; technology centers and loan programs. Unfortunately, staff in these programs may not recognize, be knowledgeable, or be trained in the unique needs of person who are hard of hearing or late deafened. Further, consumers may be reluctant to use these resources for fear that appropriate accommodations will not be provided and their communication needs not met.

Preventing an Incorrect Eligibility Decision/Order of Selection Determination

If a consumer is found to be ineligible because there are no functional limitations resulting in impediments to work (seldom will this occur), the counselor must be certain that the consumer understands the reason for the ineligibility decision, and that the consumer fully understands appeal rights and procedures.

If the consumer is found to be eligible for services and the state VR agency is currently operating in an Order of Selection for Services (OSS), it is critical that the counselor make an appropriate OSS determination. If the consumer is not currently designated to be served due to the state agency's OSS priorities, information and referral services must be effectively explained. These situations require that the counselor effectively communicate the situation to the consumer.

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Objectives

Increase knowledge and understanding about the impact of hearing loss among the wide range of individuals who are hard of hearing and late deafened and examine how this affects vocational rehabilitation service delivery to these consumers.

Identify and address the unique communication functioning of individual consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened to establish an effective counseling relationship.

Increase skills in functional assessment, eligibility determination, order of selection priority category, and employment planning with consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened.

Improve counseling and guidance skills with consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened to address issues regarding the hearing loss and its' impact on employment.

Increase awareness of employment problems to provide job accommodations or other solutions for consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened, especially those who experience progressive hearing loss.

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5 – Individual Plan for Employment (IPE)

Comprehensive Assessment

Once eligibility for vocational rehabilitation (VR) services has been established, additional information must often be obtained to pinpoint the full range, scope and options of services needed to overcome impediments identified at the time of eligibility determination.

While the use of existing hearing loss evaluations and audiograms can document the disability to determine eligibility, updated and additional evaluations and assessments may need to be authorized in order to help determine the employment goal and rehabilitation services to be included in the individualized plan for employment (IPE). A comprehensive assessment may be needed to determine the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interest, and informed choice, including the need for supported employment, of the eligible individual.

Again, the VR counselor should remember that rehabilitation technology should be provided at any point indicated in the rehabilitation process. For the consumer who is hard of hearing, effective communication is critical to complete assessments accurately and therefore, hearing aids and other assistive technology should be considered and possibly purchased before these assessment activities are authorized or conducted.

Evaluations that might be considered, as appropriate to the individual consumer who is hard of hearing or late deafened, include:

Communication Assessment – Initial and ongoing communication observations and assessments must be conducted for the counselor to identify all the communication challenges and problems the consumer faces that need to be addressed and resolved. Specifically employment situations, but also other areas like social and personal functioning, need to be addressed to determine communication and alerting difficulties. It is important to do this throughout the VR process, before and after hearing aids and other assistive listening devices have been provided. The counselor must assess what the consumer's preferred mode of communication is and how well the consumer understands using this mode. Discussion with the consumer and family members will help indicate where problem areas are, from which the counselor can plan coping strategies, provision of technology and other services to improve communication to its optimum. Some **assessment tools** are available for these purposes. It is recommended that the VR counselor perform a communication assessment before the comprehensive audiological evaluation in order to identify any issues or questions for the audiologist to address.

General Medical Examination – A general appraisal of the consumer's overall health status to determine if there are any secondary problems that may be interfering with general functioning, or which may be effecting the hearing itself. Also, some medical conditions, such as diabetes are sometimes associated with hearing loss.

Otologic Examination – To determine the need for medical treatment and/or the prognosis for future

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deterioration of hearing.

Comprehensive Audiological Evaluation – To determine etiology, level of loss, need for hearing aids, need for speech therapy and/or other aural rehabilitation. The audiologist should also make recommendations for use of assistive listening devices from which the consumer could benefit in conjunction with the hearing aid or independent of it.

Rehabilitation Technology Assessment – In conjunction with the comprehensive audiological evaluation, all types of hearing assistive technology must be explored, considered and tried to help address the consumer's identified communication and alerting problems and technological solutions recommended. Audiologists may be able to conduct this assessment. Most, however, do not find it cost-effective in terms of time and equipment involved to provide this service. Not all audiologists are familiar with the full range of hearing assistive technology and its application and use. However, as technology advances, some hearing aids have assistive listening component options that may be recommended by audiologists. Some assistive technology vendors are able to conduct these assessments and provide education about the technology. The [Beyond Hearing Aids Learning Center](#) maintains an online assistive listening device (ALD) technical training program that teaches counselors how to identify functional limitations and determine what assistive listening and rehabilitation technology is needed to address the limitations

Ophthalmologic or Optometric Examination – Field of vision testing to rule out Retinitis Pigmentosa and to gain the best possible visual correction for the consumer who is hard of hearing or late deafened and who must rely heavily on visual input for success in communication.

Psychological or Mental Health Assessment – Aside from any intelligence or aptitude testing, it is important to determine if any identified problems, i.e. interpersonal problems; constant fatigue; or withdrawal, are psychologically based and need mental health treatment. This assessment should determine what are hearing loss related stresses and what is mental illness.

Job Site Assessment – It will be necessary in many cases for the counselor to visit the existing or potential work site to conduct an assessment and make recommendations for needed modifications in furniture arrangement, lighting, work station location, job restructuring, hearing assistive technologies (HAT), co-worker education regarding communication behaviors and use of technology, etc. Since each job site will be different, each one must be assessed independently. Because of individual needs and preferences, it is best for the assessment to be done in partnership with the consumer.

Specialty Examinations – If any secondary disability is indicated by the foregoing evaluations, it is important that it be explored by a professional skilled in that discipline in order to fully evaluate the individual's overall functioning. High blood pressure, for example, can be associated with tinnitus (ringing or other sounds in the ears).

Since many of the professionals who perform the foregoing evaluations know little about the communication, psychological or technological application of their discipline to individuals who are hard of hearing or late deafened, it is important that the counselor give the evaluator adequate background information and information on how best to communicate with the consumer. Specific questions should be posed so that the evaluator will target his or her report to the information needed for vocational planning.

Following are questions a counselor should ask of hearing health care professionals modified from 1992 IRI "Serving the Underserved, Principles, Practices and Techniques."

Otologist/Otolaryngologist

What type of hearing loss does the consumer have (sensorineural, conductive, mixed)?

Is the hearing loss bilateral/unilateral?

What was the age of onset of hearing loss?

Is the hearing loss progressive, stable, or fluctuating?

Are there indications of physiological problems such as tinnitus, vertigo, scarred ear drums?

What are (if any) possible treatment procedures for the hearing loss?

Is surgery more appropriate than fitting of hearing aids? If so, what is the expected outcome?

Are there any employment (or other) situations from a medical perspective that need to be avoided?

Audiologist

What is the degree, measurement of hearing loss, pure tone and bone conduction, and average loss in speech range?

What are the functional aspects of hearing loss; what sounds will be difficult for the consumer to understand?

What environments would be difficult for the consumer in terms of speech discrimination and sound awareness?

Are there modifications to the employment environment that would assist the consumer in communication (reasonable accommodations)?

What are the possible effects of noisy environments on the consumer's residual hearing?

What is the condition of the consumer's present hearing aid(s)? Should a different hearing aid be considered?

What ALDs would be beneficial for the consumer, especially in the employment environment? How will consumer's hearing aid(s) interface with ADLs, telecoils, etc.?

What is the individual's speech discrimination ability in noisy and quiet environments, and what is the degree of expected improvement with amplification?

Are additional services recommended?

The counselor must analyze the various reports and make the connections regarding how they will effectively translate to the needs of the individual consumer who is hard of hearing or late deafened in the employment situation.

IPE Development

The vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor may be the only professional with whom the consumer is associated who understands the nuances and implications of hearing loss as related to medical and assessment reports (or lack thereof), psychological impacts, and social, environmental and employment needs.

The most important and unique function of the VR counselor is to compile all of the consumer and assessment information, analyze it as a whole, and determine what specific problems or deficiencies are interfering with the consumer's ability to get or keep a job. This phase of the planning process is especially important because, by law, VR services can be provided for only those disability related problems that specifically impact on the consumer's employment or employability.

After a comprehensive assessment has been completed and the employment goal has been agreed upon by counselor and consumer, they will jointly determine what services will be needed to overcome or accommodate identified functional limitations in order to obtain or maintain employment.

It is important that the counselor be knowledgeable concerning the hearing disability and the myriad of associated potential services, so that a full range of service options and vendors can be presented to the consumer to make informed choices. This necessitates more than simply listing the names of service providers. The counselor must provide information about the consumer's service and service provider options. For example, for consumers considering postsecondary training options, it is helpful to their decision-making when counselors provide them with information about the types and quality of support services available for students with hearing loss at the programs being considered.

Scope of Services

Finding available local resources for needed services and vendors qualified to work with consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened is not always an easy task. The VR counselor and the VR program administrator of deaf and hard of hearing services will need to devote time to developing and educating these

resources and vendors.

Some services that can be critical to employment success have not traditionally been considered for consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened. The array of services that may be needed include:

Counseling and Guidance

The complex problems faced by individuals who are hard of hearing and late deafened may be identified and met through effective communication and substantial counseling and guidance. On-going counseling and guidance sessions with the VR counselor who has received training about the psychosocial needs of persons who are hard of hearing or late deafened will help consumers learn more about their hearing loss and the resources available to assist them. For example, the trained VR counselor can assist these consumers to identify and overcome [negative stigma](#), [social pain](#), and [communication problems](#) caused by the hearing loss.

Counseling and guidance and information could also be provided as consumers start using technology such as hearing aids and other assistive listening devices (ALDs) to help them deal with questions, problems, technical issues and ongoing communication problems. The assessment tools that were used to document the functional limitations of the hearing disability often provide clues to areas of focus for counseling and guidance sessions. The VR counselor will want to follow up on noted problems areas to see if technology and other strategies are resolving the communication issues or if other intervention is indicated. The [IDA Institute](#) offers helpful tools for counseling sessions between the trained VR counselor and the consumer who is hard of hearing or late deafened.

Providing information to the consumer who is hard of hearing or late deafened is an important, integral part of the essential counseling and guidance services. Often, this consumer has not been exposed to other persons with hearing loss or information available. The VR counselor can assist the consumer to increase their knowledge and gain valuable skills by acquainting them to various resources and information. An excellent resource for this activity is the [Hearing Loss Association of America journal](#) articles and other related information. It may be best to introduce these materials over several counseling sessions to prevent the consumer from feeling overwhelmed by extensive information and allow them to practice any skills learned.

The counselor should also be aware of possible symptoms of grief as related to the hearing loss and how this contributes to the individual's functioning. Exhibiting symptoms of the various stages of grief can greatly affect their individual and work functioning.

Mental Health Therapy

It is not unusual for counselors to encounter consumers who experience difficulties with the grieving process as well as coping and adjustment issues related to their hearing loss, especially those who incur adult-onset loss of hearing. Depression, anxiety and anger may present difficulties for these individuals. A person with depression may not be able to sustain paying attention to what people are saying and, therefore, suffer further communication failures. Such a person may not have energy available to effectively deal with the communication problems they experience. They may need to be referred for intensive counseling and therapy with knowledgeable and trained mental health service providers.

Assertiveness Training and Confidence Building

Low self-esteem is a frequently identified problem among persons who are hard of hearing or late deafened. Assertiveness in asking other people to alter environments or change their behavior to enhance communication effectiveness or be more easily understood involves taking a risk. Persons who are not accustomed to being assertive or who appear to have low self-esteem may benefit from being referred for assertion training or confidence building counseling.

Relaxation Training

This type of training can help consumers who are hard of hearing to overcome the tension and fatigue that

interfere with paying attention and which contribute to misunderstanding of what is said.

Coping Skills and Support Groups

If the consumer does not know other people with hearing disabilities and reports feeling isolated and generally misunderstood, support groups can be extremely helpful. These types of groups have been found to be successful in assisting consumers to learn to cope with communication problems and stresses encountered while in training and on the job. The leaders of these groups are generally knowledgeable and trained to work with persons who are hard of hearing or late deafened. Trained VR counselors may also consider conducting [client groups](#).

[Samuel Trychin, Ph.D.](#) offers specific training packages for adjusting and coping with hearing loss including relaxation training. Additional resources include those such as the [Hearing Loss Association of American \(HLAA\)](#) and the [Association of Late Deafened Adults \(ALDA\)](#). Some support groups such as HLAA provide excellent materials and monthly magazines. Providing a limited membership subscription to a support group may be an excellent way to educate a consumer and demonstrate the value of support groups.

Aural Rehabilitation

This includes the wide range of services that include individual and group instruction in the care and use of hearing aids, assistive listening devices and other hearing assistive technology, communication skills training, coping skills, speech reading, sign language, as well as instruction in learning strategies for preventing or reducing communication problems. These services are often associated with speech and hearing centers and audiologist group practices. They may also offer sessions for family members. Aural rehabilitation services are beneficial for most consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened, particularly those with adult onset hearing loss. Aural rehabilitation services can be crucial for the consumer to effectively manage the effects of the hearing loss.

Hearing Aids

When the consumer who is hard of hearing or late deafened applies for VR services, hearing aids are most often requested because this is the only solution they are aware of to address hearing problems. These consumers may think the hearing aid will resolve all of their communication problems and they may not understand the limitations of these instruments. Or, they are reluctant to use hearing aids.

Hearing aids are expensive and are often not covered by medical insurance. Hearing aids have to be routinely repaired and replaced over time. Some hearing aid manufacturers offer extended warranties and some limited hearing aid insurance may be available. However, the complexity and expense of such a purchase can be especially daunting for a consumer who is hard of hearing and new to this technology.

It is very important that hearing aids be considered a part of an overall technology package and their use integrated with other hearing assistive technology (HAT) needed for effective communication accommodations. For this reason, the VR counselor will need to be sure any hearing aids recommended can be interfaced with assistive listening devices before purchased.

Hearing Assistive Technology (Rehabilitation Technology)

Assessment of the consumer's communication needs will identify the areas in which technology is needed and can be utilized to improve functioning in areas of major life activities. Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT) can include a variety of ALDs that work independently or in conjunction with a hearing aid, alerting devices, vibrotactile devices, etc. to address employment and other barriers and accommodate the individual with a hearing loss.

Training Services

Consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened will need appropriate accommodations to effectively complete any training services such as post-secondary training or other job training programs. The VR counselor will need to counsel and advise the consumer about the accommodations available and required for accessibility to these services.

For post-secondary settings, the consumer should contact the school's student access center (SAC) in advance to set up needed accommodations. The VR counselor can work together with SAC staff concerning the individual consumer information and needs.

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Objectives

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Increase skills in functional assessment, eligibility determination, order of selection priority category, and employment planning with consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened.

Improve counseling and guidance skills with consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened to address issues regarding the hearing loss and its' impact on employment.

Increase awareness of employment problems to provide job accommodations or other solutions for consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened, especially those who experience progressive hearing loss.

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6 – Job Development and Job Placement

The ultimate goal of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services is the achievement of employment goals resulting in the attainment of gainful employment and independence. To facilitate achievement of consumer employment goals through the job development and placement process, a number of factors should be considered. These factors include:

Marketing to Employers

Federal legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the expansion of technology and related workplace accommodations have greatly contributed to opening doors of opportunity for persons who are hard of hearing or late deafened. In spite of these advances in the workplace, attitudinal obstacles remain. Chief among them are those associated with overcoming employer reluctance due to concerns about communication and safety related to hiring individuals with hearing loss. Communication specialists, or Rehabilitation Counselors for the Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened, who remain abreast of current developments in technology, including telecommunication technology, can help amend and address many of these concerns. The counselor should consider offering employer orientations that include:

- Dispelling myths about hearing disability
- Facilitation of good employer/employee communication
- Work site assessment and modification recommendations

Advocating for Workplace Accommodations

Often, persons who are hard of hearing are not willing to call attention to their hearing loss or are unaware of the severity of the hearing loss and tend to become isolated in the workplace. These workers can benefit from access to training to become more aware of appropriate workplace accommodations and ways to effectively assert themselves in addressing their on-the-job communication needs.

The VR counselor can prepare an individual who is hard of hearing or late deafened to be successful in job search, job interview and job orientation. Counseling and practice in the following skills should result in increased consumer confidence and employability:

- How to present their disability prior to and during an interview
- How to discuss the need for communication enhancements – both technological and environmental
- How to put interviewers and employers at ease with their disability, while ensuring an optimal two-way communication situation
- How to be an effective self-advocate

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Job Retention and Career Advancement

Once consumers obtain employment, a desired outcome is that they will retain their jobs and advance in their careers. It is not uncommon, however, for consumers with hearing loss to encounter challenges in their efforts to advance in their careers. These challenges are attributed, at least in part, to communication barriers. These communication barriers may include lack of access to accommodations such as assistive listening devices, and difficulties interacting and communicating with co-workers and supervisors. Factors critical to job retention and advancement may include:

- Access to in-service training or continuing education to upgrade skills
- Access to staff meetings
- Reassignment of job duties if needed to eliminate communication barriers
- Availability of appropriate technology to make the work environment accessible
- Access to individual or small group coaching or mentoring

Job Analysis and Work Site Assessment

The VR counselor who is trained as an effective communication specialist can help with employer, employee and co-worker education and technical assistance. This should begin with job analysis to identify the essential tasks of the job and how would the effects of the hearing disability affect performance of these tasks. Specific communication demands of the job and examples to be addressed include:

- One-to-one – Face-to-face communication in quiet and noisy settings, communication with co-workers, supervisors, customers, etc.
- Group – Employee and business meetings, training situations, informal and formal group functions, etc.
- Lecture with audience – Business presentations, teachers and trainers with students, supervisors in meetings, etc.

Environmental factors such as lighting, location of workstation and furniture placement need to be considered. Keeping in mind the consumer's role in identifying reasonable accommodations, the counselor may offer tools for assessing the accessibility of a work site. Solutions can be defined in terms of Low-Tech, High-Tech or "No-Tech."

As a consumer is preparing for the world of work and a specific job, the counselor should also prepare him or her for evaluating communication needs on the job and negotiating for reasonable accommodations. Counselors need to educate consumers and employers regarding the following types of reasonable accommodations and examples:

- Job restructuring – Trading telephone receptionist duties for additional report writing assignments.
- Job reassignment – Store greeter to stock clerk.
- Provision of auxiliary aids and services – Company providing ALDs for employee meetings and trainings.
- Modifications to a job site – Installing telephone amplifiers on office phones, moving office from cubicle to location with walls for less background noise.

The more in-depth job analysis and job site assessment the VR counselor can do, the more effective job accommodations and solutions can be obtained. An excellent resource for the VR counselor to perform and learn this process is "[On the Job With Hearing Loss](#)" by Rebecca Morris.

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Objectives

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Increase awareness of employment problems to provide job accommodations or other solutions for consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened, especially those who experience progressive hearing loss.

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7 – Closure and Post Employment

Closure

Significant counselor/consumer contact is recommended after suitable job placement has been made to be certain that the consumer has made a satisfactory adjustment. Remember, it is not usually the consumer's inability to perform the work tasks that interferes with his/her continued and successful employment.

Counselors must attend to the following:

Is the employment suited to the consumer's education, abilities and choice?

Is the employer aware of the consumer's hearing loss? Accepting of it?

Is the workplace environment arranged to best facilitate communication?

Are assistive listening devices going to be used? Do they know how to operate them?

Is all needed technology in place, operational and easily maintained?

Are consumer's supervisor and co-workers comfortable and successful in communicating with consumer?

Are procedures in place to provide assistive listening devices or other appropriate accommodations for staff meetings and training?

Has the consumer been counseled regarding their responsibilities for future technology needs (replacement hearing aids, etc.)?

Do the consumer and the employer understand post-employment services that may be available from VR?

Post-Employment Services

At the time of IPE development, and at the time of closure, the counselor must inform the consumer of the potential for post-employment services. When the consumer requests additional services after closure, the VR counselor must determine whether it is most appropriate to provide services in post-employment or open a new case. If there are new or extensive issues to be addressed to resolve problems on the job or if the consumer is changing to a new job or position, a new case may be considered.

If the consumer needs minimal assistance to address on the job difficulties, post-employment may be appropriate. Since eligibility does not have to be re-established, the counselor can act quickly in a job threatening situation. Some post-employment services that may be considered for consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened include:

Consultation or technical assistance to a work site supervisor

Work site assessment and recommendations for modification if the work site changes

Replacement and/or repair of hearing aid (consumer should be counseled prior to case closure of his/her expected role in contribution or full payment dependent upon situation and salary)

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Conclusion

After finishing this section, return to the answers for the [Self-Analysis Questionnaire](#). Review the ratings for the questionnaire to determine any differences and thoughts after completing this training.

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Objectives

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8 – VR Resources

Assessment Tools

[Self-test for hearing loss from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association \(ASHA\)](#)

[Hearing Handicap Inventory for Adults \(HHIA\)](#)

[Communication, Beyond Hearing Aids, Inc.](#)

[Self-Assessment of Communication \(SAC\)](#)

[Significant Other Assessment of Communication \(SOAC\)](#)

[Counseling and the Grief Process](#)

Consumer Organizations

[Association of Late Deafened Adults \(ALDA\)](#)

[Hearing Loss Association of America \(HLAA\)](#)

Counseling Tools

[Samuel Trychin, Ph.D. resources for adjustment, coping and counseling](#)

Information and Training Tools

[ACCOMMODATE](#), DVDs for teaching consumers about technology use and accommodations – Arkansas Rehabilitation Research and Training Center

[Better Hearing Institute](#)

[Beyond Hearing Aids Learning Center](#)

[Hard of Hearing Students in Postsecondary Settings: A Guide for Providers](#)

[On the Job with Hearing Loss](#) instructional book

[Model State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation Services to Persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing, or Late Deafened](#)

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Objectives

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9 – How Assessment

A useful tool for determining the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by VR Counselors serving consumers who are hard of hearing and late deafened is:

- Rehab Act Amendments of 1998
- 2008 Model State Plan (MSP) for Vocational Rehabilitation Services to Persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened
- Hard of Hearing Students in Postsecondary Settings: A Guide for Providers
- Self-Analysis Questionnaire

Which of the following is not a common misconception when providing VR services for consumers who are hard of hearing and late deafened:

- Hearing aids can correct the problems caused by the hearing loss.
- VR Counselors trained to serve consumers who are culturally deaf also know about problems faced by consumers who are hard of hearing and late deafened.
- Hearing loss is often genetic.
- Consumers who are hard of hearing and late deafened know all of their employment problems caused by their hearing loss.

Finding potential VR Consumers who are hard of hearing and late deafened can be difficult because:

- They generally do not know about VR services.
- Secondary students are not always identified in the school system.
- They may hide the hearing loss due to fear of losing their job.
- All of the above

A referral source for locating persons who are hard of hearing and late deafened and may need VR services to keep their job is:

- Postsecondary school programs
- Employee assistance programs and human resource personnel
- Local healthcare providers
- State employment agencies

When a VR Counselor meets a new consumer with a hearing loss applying for services they should:

- Ask the person how best to communicate with them.
- Have assistive listening devices visible and available for use.
- Use open ended questions and structured assessment to help gather information about difficulties caused by the hearing loss.
- All of the above.

The consumer with a hearing loss is generally knowledgeable about:

- All the latest hearing assistive technology available to meet their needs.
- Specific strategies that can be used in various situations to facilitate communication.
- How to explain problems resulting from their hearing loss to friends, family and co-workers.
- None of the above.

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The VR application process might need to be expedited for a person who is hard of hearing or late deafened if they are:

- Attending high school and wanting to attend college.
- Currently employed but experiencing severe communication problems at work.
- Looking for employment.
- Retired, but wanting to return to work part-time.

To help prevent a premature closure, the VR Counselor trained to serve consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened should:

- Ensure the consumer has understood the VR Counselor, encouraging them to repeat instructions and information back to the counselor.
- Gather in-depth information about functional limitations via meetings with the consumer, questionnaire tools, and assessment of communication problems on and off the job.
- Reassure the consumer that the VR Counselor will work together with them to identify hearing loss problems and develop plans to address issues.
- All of the above.

When determining eligibility and severity of disability for a consumer with hearing loss, the best indicator will be:

- The degree of hearing loss as measured by an audiogram.
- Functional limitations identified from an assessment.
- How long the person has had the hearing loss.
- Problems reported by family.

The following information may be needed before the IPE is developed with the consumer with hearing loss:

- An eye exam
- A job site analysis and assessment.
- An assessment for hearing aids and other technology to be used with them.
- All of the above.

Consumers who are hard of hearing and late deafened may need guidance and counseling services provided by the VR Counselor to:

- Adjust to the use of hearing aids and assistive listening devices.
- Cope with stigma and social pain issues.
- Connect with resources and support groups to develop communication strategies and address hearing loss problems.
- All of the above.

A service that is often needed by consumers with hearing loss but often overlooked is:

- Aural rehabilitation.
- Provision of hearing aids.
- Job training services.
- Purchase of wake up alarm clocks.

Mental Health services may be needed for a VR consumer who is hard of hearing or late deafened if:

- Family conflicts involving teenage children are interfering with work.
- Difficulties with the grieving process over the loss of hearing are resulting in depression.
- Communication problems on the job are identified.
- Problems using assistive listening devices are encountered.

A good resource when providing training services to consumers who are hard of hearing or late deafened is:

- 2008 Model State Plan (MSP) for Vocational Rehabilitation Services to Persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened
- Rehab Act Amendments of 1998
- Hard of Hearing Students in Postsecondary Settings: A Guide for Providers
- None of the above.

After case closure, post employment services may be most appropriate when:

- The consumer changes jobs and employers.
- Extensive new issues are identified and are causing significant problems on the job.

A hearing aid repair or update is needed soon after case closure.
An additional disability is identified and causing new problems on the job.