



Vocational Rehabilitation of the Handicapped Worker

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"The manner in which our Nation cares for its citizens and conserves its manpower resources is more than an index to its concern for the less fortunate. It is a key to its future. Both wisdom and humanity dictate a deep interest in the physically handicapped, mentally ill, and the mentally retarded."

PRESIDENT JOHN KENNEDY

Vocational rehabilitation of the handicapped person is based on the belief in the worth and dignity of the individual. It is also based on the belief that every individual, if given the opportunity, can make some contribution to common welfare and his own happiness.

"The true goal of education and rehabilitation of the handicapped is to help every individual to make the most of his potential for participation in all the affairs of our society, including work, no matter how great or small his potential may be."¹

Rehabilitation Goals

The goals of education and vocational rehabilitation are similar: 1) Self realization—all the resources of the environment must be directed to enable the disabled person to realize whatever vocational potential he possesses. 2) Human relations—to assist the handicapped person in deriving satisfaction from his interaction with people and his contribution to their

welfare. 3) Economic efficiency—this goal includes learning about the world of work, learning how to find and keep jobs and learning to spend and save money.

Hawaii's Program of Vocational Rehabilitation

The manner in which this philosophy has been translated into services by the State of Hawaii is similar to other programs throughout the country, namely, through the establishment of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation with state and federal matching funds. Like all divisions, bureaus or departments of Vocational Rehabilitation, eligibility

for services is based upon:

1. The presence of a physical or mental disability and the resulting functional limitations or limitations in activities;
2. The existence of a substantial handicap to employment caused by the limitations resulting from such disability;
3. A reasonable expectation that vocational rehabilitation services may render the individual fit to engage in remunerative occupation.²

Five basic services are provided by the agency:

1. Diagnostic services including medical, psychological, and psychiatric examinations;
2. Counseling and vocational testing;
3. Physical restoration and treatment services where needed to make the handicapped person employable;
4. Training services including university, business, trade, and on-the-job training. Workshops are used for disabled persons needing more intensive training in the areas of work habits and adjustment;
5. Job placement and follow-up.

One of the major problems in the vocational rehabilitation of the young handicapped worker is that of underdeveloped "work personality", of the lack of characteristics essential for employment. This is reflected in the relative ease of job placement, but the resultant inability of the young worker to hold on to the job because he can not cope with discipline and demands of the work world.

Objectives

Some of the factors essential for vocational success are:

1. Social skills: the ability to relate and communicate with others, work with others and

alone, acceptable grooming, dress, and personal habits.

2. Appreciation of time: punctual and regular attendance, and the capacity to work at a regular and consistent pace.
3. Performance skills: ability to follow directions, awareness of safety, and application of personal hygiene practices.
4. Tolerance: sufficient physical and mental stamina to tolerate monotony and repetition.
5. Basic academic skills: ability to utilize academic skills in practical situations, i.e., handling money, telling time, reading and writing simple instructions and messages, and using basic measuring devices.
6. Pre-vocational training: early and continual training starting at the elementary grade level and gradually intensified up through the high school level. This training can encompass the use of tools and materials, field trips and excursions to places of vocational training and work, and work experience within and outside the school. An important element of pre-vocational training must be assistance in self-assessment. This pre-vocational training emphasizing increasing familiarity and incorporation of skills, attitudes, and habits essential to employment must be essentially completed prior to the individual's referral to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Training

In the transition from a child and student to a young adult worker, a clear understanding and appreciation of the differences between play and work must be developed. Some trainees make this transition without apparent difficulty. Others find the

transition extremely difficult and time consuming. For the latter, workshops can serve a vital role by bridging the play and work world. The workshop can gradually expose the neophyte worker to a simulated industrial work environment.

For the young handicapped worker ready for training in vocational skills, the training is available basically in two forms: formal and informal. Formal training occurs in or through technical and business schools. Where formal training is not available, restricted, or inappropriate for the handicapped, on-the-job training can be used to good advantage. Minimum or sub-minimum wages can be paid the worker during the training period and the employer-trainer is compensated for the costs involved in training the handicapped. Perhaps, the outstanding feature of the on-the-job training is the individualized and flexible planning possible.

The Job

Job placement, whether in competitive or sheltered employment, is and should be the planned culmination of the vocational rehabilitation process. The placement process is based on the matching of the abilities—potential and actual—of the handicapped with the job requirements. Occasionally, the job requirements and work stations may need to be modified to reduce or eliminate the disability as a job handicap.

Follow-up services to the handicapped and to the employer is a vital aspect of the vocational rehabilitation of the handicapped. It is at this stage that the final adjustments are made to assure satisfaction to the worker and the employer.

¹President's Panel on Mental Retardation. *National Action to Combat Mental Retardation*. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, October, 1962. p. 100.

²Hawaii Plan, Section 8.2.