

**ENHANCING TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS  
OF AGENCIES, CONSUMERS, AND  
EMPLOYERS:**

**FINAL REPORT**

**Conducted by the  
American Foundation for the Blind  
Under Subcontract to the  
Rehabilitation Research and Training Center  
on Blindness and Low Vision at  
Mississippi State University**

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## Abstract

This 5-year training and research project conducted by the American Foundation for the Blind under subcontract to the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University was funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. Replicable training programs targeted toward employers, rehabilitation service providers, and consumers were developed, tested, and evaluated. The training addressed ways to reduce the persistently high rate of unemployment of persons who are blind or visually impaired. Fourteen training programs were developed and delivered: six for rehabilitation professionals, seven for consumers, and one for employers. Over 700 persons received training.

The innovative training model found to be effective for **providers** was one in which successfully employed persons who were blind or who had other disabilities were included as trainers, discussing the attitudes and skills which they acquired and the strategies they developed to obtain and retain employment. The innovative model found to be effective with **consumers** was training in the use of mentors and role models while they, the recipients of the training, were participating in community rehabilitation programs.

Only one training session was conducted for employers. Although judged to be well designed and participated in fully by the participants, it could not be replicated during the project because of an inability to attract the employment community.

Several strategies for evaluating the quality of the training and the relevance of the information covered were utilized. For many reasons, none of the methods yielded sufficient data to objectively determine the most effective training approach.

Many factors outside the control of the project had an impact on the availability of consumers, employers, and providers to participate in the training. Some of the external factors impacting this training project were corporate downsizing, mandated training on provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and threats to the survival of specialized rehabilitation programs serving persons who are blind.

The project did compile detailed training outlines and curricula which were disseminated whenever appropriate. This material, which is available upon request, will be incorporated into an article which will be submitted to a professional journal for publication.

## **Introduction**

In October, 1991, the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) entered into a 5-year project funded through a subcontract with the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University. The project was targeted to address 1 of the 12 priorities established by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR).

This final report will briefly describe the training models which were developed, replicable models and availability of training curricula, evaluation methodologies and outcomes, accomplishments of the project, problems which were encountered, external factors which contributed to those problems, and overall findings and implications of this project. Attachments 1 through 13 provide detail on each of these topics.

### ***Purpose of the Project***

The project's purpose was to develop new and innovative training models to promote the hiring, retention, and advancement of employees who are blind or visually impaired. A research component was incorporated to evaluate the effectiveness of these training models on employment outcomes. The targeted populations were rehabilitation agencies, employer associations, and consumer groups.

The underlying need addressed by the training models developed is for improved techniques, strategies, and information which will lead to a decrease in the high rate of unemployment among persons who are blind or visually impaired. Factors which have changed significantly over the past several years and must be incorporated in future training curricula include the changing labor market and demographic shifts in the workforce, advances in technology, the current legislative environment, and laws promoting equal access. Training for vocational rehabilitation (VR) providers must focus on these changes while recognizing that placing persons who are blind or visually impaired in employment involves marketing principles emphasizing the needs and interests of prospective employees and employers.

New and evolving social policy emphasizes empowering consumers rather than "fitting" the individual into a narrow range of occupations in which persons who are blind have been successfully employed for many years. Providers and consumers must recognize the positive impact of this change. Training for employers must emphasize the wide range of occupations in which employees who are blind or visually impaired are successfully performing and the resources which are available to assist employers and employees.

Finally, cost-effectiveness and retention of information presented through training were assessed. Training models were replicable and the curriculum was disseminated widely.

***Training Topics, Methodology, and Participants***

Each of the three target populations (i.e., providers of rehabilitation services, consumers, and employers) required different strategies to identify training topics and curriculum. Training needs were assessed in various ways depending on the target population. This information was combined with the knowledge and experience of the trainers and the realities faced in providing training.

Instructional objectives were identified for all training sessions and a training outline was developed to address the instructional objectives. Training materials were prepared in accessible formats. Training sessions varied in length from 1 to 8 hours. Not all training topics were presented in every training session. The specific content depended on the needs assessment, the setting, and the knowledge of the trainers. The number of training sessions conducted and the approximate number of participants are contained in Table 1.

**Table 1: Target Population Receiving Training, Number of Training Sessions, and Approximate Number of Participants**

<b>Target Population</b>	<b>Number of Training Sessions</b>	<b>Approximate Number of Participants</b>
VR Providers	6	230
Blind/Visually Impaired Persons	7	450
Employers	1	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>710</b>

***Training for Vocational Rehabilitation Providers***

Of the six training programs conducted for providers of rehabilitation services, four were presented to staff of state rehabilitation agencies (see Attachments 2 through 5); two were presented to professionals attending state chapter or regional meetings of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) (see Attachments 1 and 6).

One notable difference in the training settings is that staff of rehabilitation

agencies participated in the training as part of their employment responsibilities and their attendance was "required". Expenses were paid by their employers. Those who attended the training in conjunction with AER meetings were there by choice. Some were reimbursed for expenses while others were not.

Training topics included:

- Transition Services for Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired
- Implications of the Americans with Disabilities Act on Services for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired
- Techniques of Job Development
- Trends in the Labor Market
- Characteristics of Successfully Employed Persons With Disabilities
- Major Issues Affecting the High Rate of Unemployment of Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired
- Rehabilitation Services for Seniors who are Blind or Visually Impaired

### ***Training for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired***

Five of the seven training sessions provided for consumers were conducted in conjunction with facility-based training programs in which the individuals were participating. The topic of these training sessions was "Career Exploration and Use of AFB's Careers and Technology Information Bank (CTIB) as a Source of Mentors and Role Models" (see Attachment 9). Additionally, a presentation was given to consumers attending a general session of the national meeting of the American Council of the Blind entitled, "Can Full Employment be Achieved for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired by the Year 2002?" (see Attachment 8). This does not fit the usual training model as there was a large gathering of people, and the presentation was one of several given sequentially. The decision to include this session in this report reflects the project's efforts to attempt different or innovative approaches to reaching the target populations. It is assumed that those who attended this session viewed it more as a presentation rather than a training program.

A training session was designed for parents of blind or visually impaired students attending a regional low vision conference of professionals and

consumers. The training workshop entitled, "Employment Outlook -- 1996 to 2010: What are the Opportunities for Today's Visually Impaired Youth", attracted a large number of blind persons as well as counselors (see Attachment 10).

### ***Training for Employers***

One training session was developed and presented for employers entitled, "Insights Forum" (see Attachment 7). Twenty-nine employees from nine San Francisco Bay Area corporations participated in the training. The focus of this workshop was to expand employers' understanding of the range of jobs that persons who are blind are performing and the resources which are available to help recruit and accommodate employees who are blind.

### ***Replicable Training Models***

The contract called for the development and testing of training models which can be utilized by organizations, agencies, and corporations. Innovative training approaches were tried; training topics and settings varied for each target population. Detailed training outlines and curriculum were developed and are included as Attachments in this report. This material has been made available to state rehabilitation agency personnel and others involved in developing and providing training. They will continue to be available to anyone upon request.

The most successful training approach for providers of rehabilitation services was the inclusion of successfully employed persons with disabilities in the training process during which these individuals discussed their attitudes, skills, strategies, and behaviors.

One journal article has already been published (see Attachment 11) which identifies the characteristics of successfully employed persons who are blind. Similarly, there is an increased interest in focusing on "Best Practices and Exemplary Programs" and incorporating these into staff development programs. An article will be submitted for publication which discusses strategies for utilizing what has been learned about the criteria of successful rehabilitation programs.

The focus on success and "what works" generated much interest and enthusiasm among service providers receiving training through this project. Likewise, administrators have expressed an interest in a training approach based on success and achievements rather than on deficits and problems. An article will be developed and submitted for publication which incorporates these elements.

The training model found most effective for consumers was utilization of mentors during the career exploration period for participants in rehabilitation facilities. These individuals are actively involved in rehabilitation training. The focus on successful role models appeared to generate a more positive attitude and greater enthusiasm. As with rehabilitation personnel who participated in the

training as a component of their employment, these consumers are more readily available thus, simplifying the logistics of convening a training program.

There continues to be an interest from parents in learning more about available services and meeting successful adults who are blind or visually impaired. There is undoubtedly value added by conducting a training session for parents which also attracts providers and consumers. A setting of this type, particularly one attracting as many participants as this project did, presents challenges for objectively evaluating the impact on the target population.

### ***Evaluation Methodology and Outcomes***

Evaluation methodologies were established and when necessary, the evaluation procedures were reviewed by AFB's Institutional Review Board to assure the protection of human subjects. Four methods for evaluating the quality and relevance of the training sessions were utilized. Methods were linked to the established instructional objectives. Details regarding evaluation methodology can be found in Attachments 1 through 10.

In seven of the training workshops, an evaluation questionnaire was distributed and participants were asked to complete this before leaving. Following one training session, post-training questionnaires were mailed to participants sometime after the conclusion of the training. Following six of the training sessions, participants were contacted by phone to obtain their assessment of the quality and relevance of the training. An indirect method (i.e., observing changes in behavior or practice by the participants) was selected as an evaluation method in one of the training sessions. The principles underlying an assessment based on more indirect methods were utilized with respect to the impact of all of the training programs in the project.

The most effective evaluation method was through individual phone contact with the participants. However, this is a highly labor intensive method and is not recommended for use in larger gatherings where the names and phone numbers of participants are not easily obtained. One can only speculate on reasons for the effectiveness of individual phone contact but it may have something to do with personal contact and attention.

The least effective methodology was asking participants to complete evaluation questionnaires before and after the session. In those workshops where participants completed questionnaires, a low percentage of the participants actually completed the task. In one instance, participants objected so strongly that the trainers decided to discontinue the evaluation process for fear of disrupting the planned training. Indirect methods are less intrusive and less labor intensive but more subjective. This approach lends itself to observing the longer range impact of an activity or training program.

It was anticipated that a study of cost/benefit would be conducted, and that a component of the research phase of this project would measure the impact in

terms of increases in numbers of blind persons who obtained employment or were promoted. The researchers were unable to analyze either factor. Regardless of how well designed and presented a training program is, the length of training is only one of many factors which will affect the outcomes of the rehabilitation process.

### ***Accomplishments of the Project***

This project designed and delivered 14 well prepared and targeted training programs guided by what administrators and consumers said they wanted and needed. Much has been learned and taught through this project and the materials developed will be a resource in the rehabilitation of persons who are blind or visually impaired in the future. There are many real and tangible accomplishments which were achieved during this project:

1. Development of training outlines and curricula by knowledgeable trainers familiar with the capabilities of persons who are blind or visually impaired, the realities of the employment market, and the availability of high quality services by rehabilitation professionals.
2. Provision of training to more than 700 employers, consumers, and rehabilitation professionals.
3. Demonstration of innovative training models, including the use of successful employees who are blind, and training of parents alongside professionals and consumers.
4. Dissemination of materials through the publication of a journal article and plans for several others under development.
5. Contribution to the increased focus on employment outcomes by providers and consumers.

### ***Problems Encountered During This Project***

Only one training program for employers was conducted under this project. It was anticipated that at least one training session would be provided for human resource managers at an annual training conference or at the President's Committee for Employment of Persons with Disabilities. Workshop proposals were submitted to both organizations but were not selected. Efforts were made to provide training for employers at community-based meetings of employer

associations but were also unsuccessful.

Collaborative efforts were anticipated with consumer organizations at state and national levels to help identify training needs of their members and to co-sponsor training programs. Except for the opportunity to give a presentation at an annual meeting of the American Council of the Blind, researchers were unable to actualize this strategy.

Although six training workshops were provided for rehabilitation providers, it was difficult to secure the support of agency administrators in making staff available, particularly off-site. Self-study through distance education programs was initially proposed as a training model. However, there was little support for this approach, although it seems worthy of further exploration.

### ***External Factors Affecting This Project***

Several significant national changes occurred during the 5-year duration of this project which impacted the provision of training programs mandated within this project.

#### **Factors Affecting Employers**

1. Downsizing has caused reductions in human resource staff in corporations and reduced the need for recruiting and hiring new employees.
2. The provision of mandated training programs on the Americans with Disabilities Act has negatively impacted the availability of staff time and money for participation in other training programs.
3. Shifts toward hiring more temporary or time-limited contract personnel has shifted attention away from recruiting long-term employees.

#### **Factors Affecting the Rehabilitation System**

1. Pressure toward consolidation of employment services into "generic" service delivery systems is forcing administrators into a "survival" mentality.
2. Restrictions on out-of-state travel for staff are affecting the development of regional training programs.

3. Actual or perceived limitation in funding is causing administrators to be more cautious about committing funds and personnel for participation in training programs.
4. Major shifts in technology toward graphical displays are forcing rehabilitation agencies to address the issues of employees who are blind or visually impaired who were "forced" to leave employment because of their inability to access work-related information and data.

### **Factors Affecting Consumers**

1. Although the unemployment rate remains extremely high, the largest segment of the population who are blind or visually impaired is beyond the working years.
2. Because of critical national and state legislation, consumer organizations are focussing on fighting to preserve existing programs rather than on innovative training programs.
3. The increase in technology utilizing graphical displays is impacting access to information for those who are employed as well as others; attention focusses on addressing this issue with software designers and equipment manufacturers.

### **Findings and Conclusions**

Excellent training outlines and curriculum were developed and delivered during one of the greatest periods of change and unrest which the employment and rehabilitation communities have seen. In the face of these monumental upheavals, accurately measuring the impact of intensive but brief training programs on a well established system is virtually impossible to accomplish. In years to come, this project may be seen for its long lasting contribution to the field.

# **Appendix**

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## **Attachments 1 - 13**



## **ATTACHMENT 1**

### **TRAINING SEMINAR Techniques of Job Development**

**Presented To:** Rehabilitation professionals attending an AFB-sponsored training seminar prior to the South Central AER Regional Conference

June, 1993

Oklahoma City, OK

**Trainers:** Gerald Miller, National Consultant on Employment, AFB, New York, NY  
Karen Wolffe, Career Consultant, Mancheka, TX  
Melanie Hutto, Training Associate, MSU-RRTC, MS

#### **Instructional Objectives:**

- To increase the understanding and skills of Rehabilitation Counselors, Placement Specialists, Supervisors, and other Professionals in job development and placement techniques
- To increase participants' understanding and knowledge of working with the business community
- To expand the knowledge of the above professionals regarding resources, (reference materials and public/private programs)

#### **Training Methodology and Outline**

- This rehabilitation seminar was developed as five separate 90 minute training sessions and held just prior to the South Central AER Regional meeting. Participants attended voluntarily. In some cases, their expenses were paid by their employers.

#### **I. Introduction**

The purpose of the seminar was to help the participants:

- A. Understand the nature of job development and how it relates to the

placement process

- B. Understand and reduce obstacles which limit the practice of quality job development
- C. Understand and build upon professional and program strengths
- D. Understand the perspective of employers
- E. Develop techniques and strategies to implement a job development plan
- F. Develop a specific training action plan for implementation of seminar content

## **II. Identifying Obstacles to Successful Placement (Group Discussion)**

- Participants identified major obstacles related to: clients e.g., lack of job seeking skills; counselors (e.g., lack of time to give to placement activities); and employers (e.g., negative attitudes).
- Identification of obstacles helps to identify specific solutions

## **III. Identifying Professional and Systematic Strengths Which Contribute to Quality Placement (Group Discussion)**

- Identification of strengths helps build on positive experiences and talents

Goals of Sections II & III

- A. To enhance job development through recognition and reduction of obstacles and building upon strengths
- B. To encourage participants to believe that job placement problems are solvable

## **IV. Job Development - A Suggested Model**

This section offered a suggested model for job development which best

utilizes the experience and skills of professionals.

- A. Job Development Defined (Lecture)
- B. Who is responsible for job development? (Group Discussion)
- C. Participants identified individuals who have responsibility for job development
- D. Who is responsible for other areas of placement (e.g., job counseling, job-seeking skills, job analysis? (Group Discussion)
- E. Identification of skills and experience necessary to perform diverse placement activities (Group Discussion)
- F. Discussion of problems of having one professional (e.g., the Rehabilitation Counselor) perform all placement activities (Group Discussion)
- G. The Employer Account Representative and The Client Account Representative - A Suggested Model (Lecture)

Discussion of Advantages and Disadvantages of the Model

**V. What Does Rehabilitation Offer the Business Community? (Lecture & Group Discussion)**

The purpose of this section was to identify the valuable services which the rehabilitation system offers to the business community, and to lessen the feeling that we are asking the employers for help.

This approach was enhanced by asking the participant to assume the role of the employer.

- A. Retention of Employees who are experiencing Vision Loss (Lecture & Group Discussion)
  - 1. Retraining
  - 2. Assisting in upward & lateral mobility
  - 3. Individual Assessment

Discuss advantages of addressing this issue first

- B. Outreach and Recruitment
- C. Accommodation and Accessibility Information
- D. Advice on Compliance with Federal Laws
- E. Supervisor Awareness
- F. Strategies Which Work
  - 1. Mentorship Programs
  - 2. CTIB
- G. Participation in Government Programs (e.g., On-The-Job Training and Projects With Industry)

## **VI. Does Business Want to Hire Blind Persons?**

Employers want to hire qualified individuals who can do the job.

The DuPont Experience as representative of employers

- A. Employer experience regarding attendance, job performance, and safety
- B. Interest in diverse workforce
- C. The shortage of qualified, trained, dedicated workers

## **VII. What Can Business Offer Rehabilitation? (Lecture & Group Discussion)**

The purpose of this section was to emphasize the partnership aspects of business and rehabilitation. Participants learned there is much to be gained from a working relationship with business beyond a specific job placement.

- A. Information (Lecture & Group Discussion)
  - 1. Future Trends

2. Job Openings
3. Contacts
- B. Resource Assistance
  1. Executives on Loan
  2. client feedback (e.g., mock interviews)
  3. Meeting Space
  4. Publicity of Agency Programs
  5. Staff Training
- C. Other
  1. Volunteer Experiences
  2. Internships for Staff

### **VIII. Implementing Job Development Activities. (Lecture & Group Discussion)**

The purpose of this section was to assist the practitioners in learning techniques for initiation and implementation of job development.

Participants will assume the perspective of employers in understanding techniques.

- A. Timing (when)

Begin in a "period of calm"

Discuss advantages and implications for practice
- B. Whom to Contact
  1. Approach more than hiring staff
    - a. Human Resources departments

- b. Supervisors of disabled employees
    - c. Training Staff
  - 2. Contacting decisions based on size and type of organization
- C. Approach
  - 1. Service centered around employer needs
  - 2. Activities which precede approach (Similarities to the Individual Client Approach)
  - 3. Understanding the Company
    - a. Resources of a formal nature (e.g., publications)
    - b. Resources of an informal nature (e.g., human resources)
  - 4. Importance and implications of doing your "homework"
  - 5. Explain the rehabilitation process (i.e., a brief discussion of "What Does Your Agency Do?")
  - 6. Be honest
  - 7. Have resources available
  - 8. Follow-Up

**IX. Advantages & Disadvantages of this Approach. (Group Discussion)**

This section will help participants understand the realities of the Employer Account Model, reduce frustrations which result from "non-hires", and understand the long-term positive results which can be achieved.

- A. Disadvantages
  - 1. Lack of immediate success
  - 2. Time necessary
  - 3. Specific assignment of trained staff

4. Difficulty in measuring success
- B. Advantages
1. More positive employer response
  2. Development of future jobs
  3. Linking job trends and rehabilitation training
  4. Appropriate use of professional staff

## **X. Follow-Up: Discussion of Training Action Plan**

### **Recommended Resource Reading List**

Bissonnette, D., & Pimentel, R. (1984). *Performance based placement manual*. Northridge: Milt Wright and Associates.

Bowe, F., & Rochlin, J. *The business rehabilitation partnership*. Fayetteville: Arkansas Rehabilitation Research and Training Center in Vocational Rehabilitation.

Greenwood, R., & Johnson, V. A. (1985). *Employer concerns regarding workers with disabilities*. Fayetteville: Arkansas Rehabilitation Research and Training Center in Vocational Rehabilitation.

Greenwood, R., Johnson, V. A., & Schriener, K. F. (1988). *Rehab Mark trainer's guide*. Fayetteville: Arkansas Rehabilitation Research and Training Center in Vocational Rehabilitation.

Vandergoot, D., & Worrall, J. D. (Eds.). (1979). *Placement in rehabilitation: A career development perspective*. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

*Equal To The Task II: 1990 DuPont Survey of Employment of People with Disabilities Source Information*.

## **Evaluation Methodology**

A pre-seminar questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire (large print) was given to each participant and completed during the first half hour of training. Additional research methodology will consist of post-seminar questionnaire, completion of training seminar action plan, and follow-up of the plan.

## Pre-Seminar Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure the Seminar's success in imparting knowledge to the participants. A post-seminar questionnaire will be sent to you following the training.

Be assured that all individual responses to this questionnaire are strictly **confidential**. The results will be compiled for statistical analysis on a group basis only.

For each question, please select the one category that you consider is your best answer at this time (including "I don't know") even if more than one answer may seem appropriate.

1. The percentage of job openings advertised in the newspaper is:
  - a) 5%
  - b) 15%
  - c) 30%
  - d) 55%
  - e) don't know
  
2. For purposes of job development: The most appropriate person to contact at a large company (75 or more employees) is:
  - a) the department head
  - b) personnel director
  - c) the president
  - d) don't know
  
3. The most appropriate person to contact at a small company (10-75 employees) is:
  - a) the president
  - b) department head

- c) personnel director
  - d) don't know
4. The following is an example of a job obtained through the "Hidden Job Market."
- a) referral through an employee
  - b) referral through a private placement agency
  - c) response to a newspaper ad with a Box #
  - d) don't know
5. Which of the following is not a resource for obtaining information on specific companies?
- a) Chamber of Commerce
  - b) Fortunes Plan & Product Directory
  - c) Guide for Occupational Strategy
  - d) Better Business Bureau
  - e) don't know
6. Employers are most likely motivated to utilize the services of a job development specialist to:
- a) implement the Title I requirements of ADA
  - b) implement the Title III requirements of ADA
  - c) participate in Government funded programs such as Targeted Jobs Tax Credits
  - d) retain experienced employers
  - e) assist recruitment of qualified workers

7. Businesses' major complaint about the rehabilitation service delivery system is:
  - a) the referral of unqualified workers
  - b) limited ability to provide information on government regulation
  - c) lack of understanding of needs of business
  - d) limited knowledge of technical aspects of jobs
  - e) limited financial incentives which would encourage hiring

### Prospect Identification

1. Identify the business most likely to hire
  - a. large Companies
  - b. expanding Companies
  - c. companies with history of hiring people with disabilities
2. Identify by Occupations
  - a. frequency of occupations
  - b. growth occupations
  - c. identification of occupations performed by people with vision loss.
  - d. preliminary general analysis of occupations

**NOTE:** Occupations for people with vision loss should not be ruled out without careful job analysis and exploration of job modification restructure, or accommodation through technology.

## **Evaluation Outcomes**

No completed pre- or post-training questionnaires are available. Those that were completed at the workshop cannot be located. It was at this time that a change in personnel resulted in a reassignment of Project Coordinators. We believe that this transition resulted in the loss of the completed questionnaires. Follow-up questionnaires were not sent to participants as not everyone attended all sessions and there was not a pre-training questionnaire to use as a basis of comparison.

## **Trainers' Comments**

Attendees actively participated in this 7½-hour training seminar. Personal comments from participants were very positive. One advantage of conducting the seminar as part of an AER convention was reduced expenses for individuals and agencies. An additional benefit was the attendance of motivated professionals since participation was not sponsored or required.

One of the disadvantages of conducting the seminar in conjunction with the AER convention was that some individuals did not attend each session. Some reasons for this included:

- a convention atmosphere,
- an early morning session after late evening activities, and
- attendance not required.

## **ATTACHMENT 2**

### **TRAINING SEMINAR**

#### **Transition Services for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired**

**And--**

**Services for Seniors who are Blind or Visually Impaired**

**And--**

**Implications of the Americans with Disabilities Act on  
Services for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired**

**And--**

**Employment Services for Persons who are Blind or Visually  
Impaired**

**Presented To:** Staff of the Utah Rehabilitation Services Program

February, 1994

Salt Lake City, Utah

**Trainers:** Gil Johnson, Director, AFB West, San Francisco, CA  
Don Harkins, Director, AFB Midwest, Chicago, IL

#### **Instructional Objectives:**

For specific instructional objectives, see Attachments 2-A, 2-B,  
2-C, and 2-D.

#### **Training Methodology**

Four 2-hour training seminars for vocational counselors, rehabilitation teachers, supervisors, and administrators were presented for staff of the Utah Services for the Blind. The training was a combination of lecture and discussion. For specific seminar outlines, see Attachments 2-A, 2-B, 2-C, and 2-D.

#### **Evaluation Methodology And Outcomes**

Questionnaires for each training module were prepared and were to be completed immediately following each training session. The brief questionnaires were prepared in standard and large print, in Braille, and on tape. When the evaluations were distributed following the first training module, a few staff objected strongly to completing the questionnaire. Mechanical problems of

completing the evaluations by blind and low vision participants were given as the basis for the objections.

The objections were genuine and strongly felt. To avoid disrupting the remaining training modules, the presenters decided to discontinue the evaluation process and continue on with the training. Undocumented comments during and following the training sessions substantiate the observations of the trainers that the participants were actively involved in the content of the training and that the information covered was relevant to their jobs. Trainers were, however, unable to objectively document any long-term impact of the training as post-training evaluation was not conducted.

## **ATTACHMENT 2-A**

### **TRAINING SEMINAR Transition Services for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired**

**Presented To:** Staff of the Utah Rehabilitation Services Program

February, 1994

Salt Lake City, Utah

**Trainers:** Gil Johnson, Director, AFB West, San Francisco, CA  
Don Harkins, Director, AFB Midwest, Chicago, IL

#### **Instructional Objectives:**

To expand participants' understanding of the distinctions between the terms "career", "occupation", "vocation", and "job";

To increase participants' understanding of the career development stages students generally pass through, and the implications for elementary and secondary curriculum development; and

To help participants develop a model transition program involving the public schools, state rehabilitation services, the family, the community, and the student.

#### **Training Outline**

- I. Pre-training Questions and Procedures:
  - A. comparative training models
  - B. pre- and post-training questions
  - C. confidentiality
  - D. identification codes
  - E. questions distributed and completed
  
- II. Review of Instructional Objectives:
  - A. definition of terms
  - B. career development stages
  - C. model program

- III. Discussion of the distinction between "career, occupation, vocation, and job"
  - A. importance
  - B. "career" defined
  - C. "occupation" defined
  - D. "vocation" defined
  - E. "job" defined
  
- IV. Stages of career development:
  - A. importance
  - B. "fantasy"
  - C. "tentative"
  - D. "realistic"
  - E. reference
  
- V. Model career development program:
  - A. career development team and their role(s)
  - B. program components
    - 1. information
    - 2. counseling
    - 3. experience
    - 4. skills acquisition
  
- VI. Eleven dos and don'ts guiding a growth-producing career development program
  
- VII. Reference Materials

## Pre-Seminar Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure the Seminar's success in imparting knowledge to the participants. A post-seminar questionnaire will be sent to you following the training. Your participation is strictly voluntary. If you choose not to complete this questionnaire, you will not be penalized in any way.

Be assured that all responses to this questionnaire are strictly confidential. The completed questionnaires will be seen by only project training staff and will not be released to supervisory or administrative staff. The results will be compiled for statistical analysis on a group basis only.

For each question, please select the choice that you consider to be your best answer at this time.

1. The terms career, occupation, and job can be thought of as:
  - A. being interchangeable
  - B. career being general, occupation being more specific, and job being quite specific
  - C. career being quite specific, occupation less specific, and job being much broader
  - D. don't know
  
2. Children generally become involved in the stages of career development in:
  - A. elementary grades
  - B. junior high
  - C. high school
  - D. no pattern exists
  - E. don't know
  
3. The generally accepted theory regarding stages of career development could be described as:
  - A. explorative, testing, concrete
  - B. fantasy, tentative, realistic
  - C. questioning, challenging, accepting
  - D. no identifiable descriptors exist
  - E. don't know.

4. With regard to working with school age students, rehabilitation regulations:
  - A. prohibit vocational rehabilitation personnel from working with students while they are still in school
  - B. permit working with students only during their last year in school
  - C. permit working with students only after age 16
  - D. permit working with students only after age 14
  - E. No restrictions exist regarding age or grade level
  - F. don't know.
  
5. Laws governing personnel not employed by school districts:
  - A. require the personnel to possess a teaching credential
  - B. prohibit non-school employees from working with students in school facilities during the school day
  - C. allow non-school employees to work with students at school facilities only under supervision of a credentialed teacher or school administrator
  - D. permit non-school employees to work with students at school facilities with the prior knowledge and approval of the school administrator and with the assistance of a credentialed teacher
  - E. no laws governing this issue exist
  - F. don't know.

## **ATTACHMENT 2-B**

### **AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND**

#### **TRAINING SEMINAR**

#### **Services for Seniors who are Blind or Visually Impaired**

**Presented To:** Staff of the Utah Rehabilitation Services Program

February, 1994

Salt Lake City, Utah

**Trainers:** Gil Johnson, Director, AFB West, San Francisco, CA  
Don Harkins, Director, AFB Midwest, Chicago, IL

#### **Instructional Objectives:**

To familiarize participants with estimated statistical information of the prevalence of severely visually disabled persons living in the community

To familiarize participants with the differences between the Aging service delivery system and the Rehabilitation service delivery system;

To expand participants' understanding of the factors affecting the integration of older persons who are blind or visually impaired into community programs; and

To familiarize participants with available resource materials on aging and blindness.

#### **Training Outline**

- I. Pre-training questions
  - A. comparable training models;
  - B. pre- and post-test
  - C. confidentiality
  - D. identification codes
  - E. questions distributed and completed

- II. Review of Instructional Objectives
  - A. introductory comments
  - B. statistical information on prevalence
  - C. differences between the aging and rehabilitation service systems
  - D. factors affecting integration of persons who are blind or visually impaired (BVI) into community centers
  - E. resource and reference materials
  
- III. Estimated Prevalence of BVI
  - A. source of information
  - B. importance of the information
  - C. review/discussion of statistics
  
- IV. Differences Between the Aging and Rehabilitation Service Systems
  - A. importance
  - B. three differences between the systems
  
- V. Factors Affecting Integration of BVI Into Community Centers
  - A. questions posed to participants
    - 1. describe Chapter II program
    - 2. do segregated senior centers exist in Utah
    - 3. should they
  - B. my experiences at the San Francisco Lighthouse and in Chicago
  - C. factors which affect full participation of BVI
  - D. what must be done to affect these forces
  
- I. Other Responsibilities of Rehabilitation Teacher's in Serving BVI: Present Responsibilities
  - A. documenting cost benefits of rehabilitation services
  
- VII. Resource and Reference Materials:
  - A. books
  - B. pamphlets and flyers

## Pre-Seminar Questionnaire

1. The estimated number of severely visually impaired persons living in the community in the United States is:
  - A. 2.5 million
  - B. 3.4 million
  - C. 4.3 million
  - D. 5 million
  - E. Don't know
  
2. The estimated number of severely visually impaired persons living in the community 55 years and older in Utah is:
  - A. 10,000
  - B. 17,000
  - C. 5,000
  - D. 25,000
  - E. 40,000
  - F. Don't know
  
3. The aging service delivery system and the rehabilitation service delivery system are:
  - A. basically comparable in structure;
  - B. different, in that services available through the aging service system may vary throughout the state while those available through the rehabilitation service delivery system are more uniform;
  - C. The aging service system is administered through a central office and is not community-based while the rehabilitation service system has offices in various communities;
  - D. don't know.



**ATTACHMENT 2-C**

**TRAINING SEMINAR  
Implications of the Americans With Disabilities Act  
on Services for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired**

**Presented To:** Staff of the Utah Rehabilitation Services Program

February, 1994

Salt Lake City, Utah

**Trainers:** Gil Johnson, Director, AFB West, San Francisco, CA  
Don Harkins, Director, AFB Midwest, Chicago, IL

**Pre-Training Questionnaire**

**1. True or False**

Which of the following shall be used in determining if providing an accommodation for a qualified person with a disability would create an undue hardship? Indicate by checking true or false by each listed selection:

- A. nature and cost of the accommodation; (t) (f)
- B. financial resources of that particular facility; (t) (f)
- C. employers history of providing accommodations; (t) (f)
- D. overall size and resources of the employer; (t) (f)
- E. structure and type of employer's operations; (t) (f)

**2. Provide three additional defenses that employers might successfully use to not hire a person with a disability. An example is: "due to size or nature of business, e.g. religious entity".**

- A. -----
- B. -----
- C. -----

3. Give two examples of ways to provide accessibility when access to the physical location where the program is typically offered proves impossible. An example is: "providing services at an individual's home, or alternative accessible site".)

A. ----- accessible portion of the facility,

B. ----- disability to obtain service,

C. -----

4. **True or False**

Mary is a person who is blind. Her 10 year old daughter had to be taken to the Good News Community Hospital for treatment. Mary asks for assistance in completing the necessary forms. The hospital refuses. This is not a violation of the ADA.

## ATTACHMENT 2-D

### TRAINING SEMINAR Employment Services for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired

**Presented To:** Staff of the Utah Rehabilitation Services Program

February, 1994

Salt Lake City, Utah

**Trainers:** Gil Johnson, Director, AFB West, San Francisco, CA  
Don Harkins, Director, AFB Midwest, Chicago, IL

#### Training Outline

Complexity of the Employment Issue

- What do clients want/need from us?
- What do employers want/need from us?
- What are implications of national economic and labor market trends?
- What does Congress expect of us?

Size of Problem

Research Findings

Anecdotal Evidence

- \* Consumers complaints about delays in service
- \* Characteristics of those who are and are not working

Four Elements that Impact on Employment Services

- client needs
- employer needs

- economic and labor market trends
- Congressional mandate

Labor Market Trends

Congress' Expectations

Summary

Resources

## Pre-Training Questionnaire

1. Which of the following are trends predicted to significantly affect employment in this country? (circle all that apply)
  - A. Population will grow older creating an increasing need for health care workers,
  - B. Complexity of jobs will increase due to use of sophisticated technology,
  - C. Manufacturing will show significant growth,
  - D. High paying jobs requiring little of no advanced education/training will decrease dramatically.
  
2. Each of the following represent issues/concerns expressed by studies of employers as they consider a disabled person for a job. Indicate which of these are viewed as major and which are minor barriers. (circle major or minor)
  - A. Concern over being "dropped" by the counselor after the placement - (major - minor)
  - B. Deciphering rehabilitation terminology - (major - minor)
  - C. Providing tools and equipment that the person may need to perform the job - (major - minor)
  - D. Discharging the disabled person if (s)he is not performing - (major - minor)
  
3. Based on Department of Labor studies, which of the following sectors are projected to grow at above average rates over the next 15 years? (circle all that apply)
  - A. Retail sales;
  - B. Clerical work;
  - C. Computer repair;
  - D. Packaging;
  - E. Appliance repair;
  - F. Child care work;

## **ATTACHMENT 3**

### **TRAINING SEMINAR Employment of People who are Blind: A National Perspective**

**Presented To:** Wisconsin Division of Rehabilitation Services: For designated counselors and teachers for the blind and visually impaired and administrative staff.

February, 1995

**Trainer:** Karon Walker, Director, AFB Southeast, Atlanta, GA

#### **Instructional Objectives:**

- To inform participants of expected labor market trends for period from 1995 - 2010;
- To convey how this information specifically relates to employment opportunities for persons who are blind and visually impaired;
- To convey information on resources available nationally and locally; and
- To convey information regarding outcomes of AFB's January, 1995 Employment Summit, and specifically, information regarding characteristics of highly successful programs.

#### **Training Methodology**

This 2-hour session was a part of a 2-day workshop on various blindness-related subjects. The session was followed by a session on specific job placement techniques.

#### **Training Outline**

1. Dissemination and analysis of National Labor Trends Data compiled by Bureau of Labor Statistics.
2. Discussion of industries where employment opportunities are expected to

grow fastest and decline fastest. Discussion of implications of these trends on employment opportunities for persons who are blind or visually impaired.

3. Brief discussion of preliminary outcomes of 1995 Employment Summit and plans for further action.
4. Discussion of common characteristics of highly successful programs and how to apply these to developing Individualized Written Rehabilitation Programs.
5. Discussion of resources and dissemination of information about these resources, including:
  - AFB's Careers and Technology Information Bank
  - President's Committee Job Accommodation Network
  - AbleData
  - Federal and state government agencies (outside of V/R system)
  - Business and professional organizations

### **Evaluation Methodology and Outcomes**

Participants were told at the presentation that follow-up would be conducted in approximately 6 months. A survey form was sent to each participant in September, 1995. Eight of the 17 participants have responded. Analysis of their responses provided the following information.

1. Seven of the eight respondents found the session very useful and one respondent found the session somewhat useful.
2. Caseload size ranged from 90 clients to 150 clients. However, three of the respondents stated that their caseloads were comprised of persons whose primary disability was not blindness.
3. Analysis of responses to questions about numbers of placements was not possible because it could not be determined which placements were of blind clients.
4. Resources used by counselors included American Foundation for the Blind Careers and Technology Information Bank, placement counselors within the

agency, State Employment Service, newspapers, employer recruitment materials, libraries, and contracted job placement vendors.

5. Responses to the question regarding the most significant factors in successful placements were as follows:

"Vendors got training and creativeness."

"Client job readiness. 'hunger' to work, accept what is available."

"A prepared individual. One who has thought about accommodation ahead of time and can present options to the employer."

"Adequate computer technology with support service."

"Employer education re: blind skills."

"Well prepared client who was highly motivated."

6. Responses to the question regarding clients who had not obtained jobs were as follows:

"Narrow vocational goal."

"Aspiring to enter areas that require experience."

"A bit resistive to realistic suggestions."

"They have very specific job background and needs. A 'fit' for their skills has not been found."

"Unrealistic expectations, generally with regard to wages."

"Lack of skills."

"Employer perception that client will be a negative rather than a plus."

## **ATTACHMENT 4**

### **TRAINING SEMINAR Characteristics of Successfully Employed Persons with Disabilities**

**Presented To:** Rehabilitation Counselors, Rehabilitation Supervisors, and Administrators attending the Region X Training Conference entitled, "Focus on Employment" sponsored by the Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program

March, 1995

Seattle, WA

**Trainer:** Gil Johnson, Director, AFB West, San Francisco, CA

#### **Instructional Objectives:**

- By hearing directly from persons with disabilities who are employed, expand rehabilitation personnel's understanding of critical attitudes, skills, and strategies utilized by successfully employed persons with disabilities; and
- To help rehabilitation personnel focus their skills and experience toward positive employment outcomes for rehabilitation clients.

#### **Training Methodology**

The training session utilized a panel of six employed disabled people discussing their employment experience. The trainer facilitated the discussion. After asking all six roundtable participants to say briefly what their current jobs are, the facilitator guided the discussion so each participant described in more depth his or her experience--obtaining training, seeking employment, retaining employment, or changing jobs. The panelists were asked to comment on topics such as how they succeeded in obtaining jobs when unemployment is high among disabled people in particular and in the Northwest; what technologies they use and how they were able to adapt the technology to the workplace; how they view themselves in relation to the larger world in which most people are not disabled; and how their work experience has affected the rest of their lives. The issues which the panelists were asked to comment upon were drawn from a prior focus

group of employed persons who were blind. (See Attachment 11)

Approximately 70 rehabilitation professionals attending the RRCEP-sponsored training conference observed the roundtable discussion, and at the conclusion, were invited to ask questions.

### **Evaluation Methodology**

The quality of the participation of the panelists and the impact the workshop had on the rehabilitation professionals attending the workshop was assessed in four ways:

1. Following the workshop, the trainer rated the panelists' depth of sharing and the ways each coped with their disability and their success in securing employment. A 5-point scale was utilized (superficial=1 to deep=5). The six dimensions assessed were:
  - A. Attitudes about themselves as disabled people in a world populated largely by non-disabled people;
  - B. Attitudes about themselves, especially self-confidence and self-esteem;
  - C. Skills necessary to compensate for the disabling condition;
  - D. How their attitudes, self-confidence, and skills worked for them;
  - E. How they translated their attitudes, self-confidence, and skills into performance on the job; and
  - F. What difference their work experience has made in the rest of their lives.
  
2. Following the workshop, the trainer conducted individual discussion by phone with each panelist in order to ascertain their perception of the discussion during the workshop. In each interview, the following five issues were assessed:
  - A. How often the person has made public presentations about his or her employment experience;
  - B. In what ways this discussion was similar to ways the person usually describes his or her employment experience;

- C. In what ways this discussion was different from ways the person usually describes his or her employment experience;
  - D. Whether the person learned something from the other participants that was particularly helpful to him or her; if so, what he or she learned; and
  - E. Having participated, whether the person is now thinking differently about his or her own experience and prospects, and if so, the ways in which his or her thinking has shifted.
3. The professionals attending and observing the panel discussion were asked for their evaluation. A written questionnaire was distributed at the conclusion of the workshop, and participants were asked to complete it. The questions asked were:
- A. Of the factors the roundtable participants said contributed to their ability to obtain and retain employment, which ones do you think are most important?
  - B. The roundtable participants described changes they went through to develop characteristics that helped them secure employment. From the experiences they described, briefly describe one series of changes that you see as having been particularly important.
  - C. What factors do you regard as most important in enabling disabled people to obtain and retain employment?
  - D. Pick out one important characteristic of successfully employed disabled people. How would you use your counseling and assessment skills to help a client realize or develop this characteristic?
4. A video tape of the workshop was made, and viewing this tape helped the assessment of the participation of the panelists and the effectiveness of the facilitation of the panel discussion.

## Evaluation Outcomes

1. The ratings by the trainer following the workshop paints a picture of people who are confident in themselves and their skills.

In response to the rating regarding attitudes about themselves as disabled persons in a world populated mainly by non-disabled persons, they expressed and displayed a healthy but not arrogant attitude. They see themselves as individuals who have what society terms a disability. They feel very confident about themselves and feel good about what they have accomplished. They are rated as having better than average skills, such as independence in traveling; use of Braille and other modified methods of reading and writing; use of prosthetic devices such as artificial limbs, hearing aides, etc.; and good persuasive abilities. All displayed a "can do" attitude particularly on the job. For each one, work was extremely important and central to who they are as individuals.

2. In spite of much effort, only three of the six panelists could be reached for the follow-up phone interview after the workshop. The results are:

Each of the three panelists indicated that they had participated in other workshops discussing their disability and strategies they developed to cope with the limitations imposed by the disability on the job. They indicated that this was the first workshop where they talked to each other rather than to the audience. They felt comfortable in sharing their doubts, frustrations, criticisms about state rehabilitation programs, and their accomplishments. The panelists interviewed were impressed that persons with other disabilities had many of the same problems they did, and were impressed with their determination and development of alternative skills. None felt differently about their own disability as a result of participation on the panel.

3. Eleven evaluation questionnaires were completed following this training seminar. The results were:

Most of the respondents felt that a positive attitude about themselves as blind persons was of greatest importance, followed by the acquisition of adaptive skills.

With regard to changes the panelists described, the respondents noted a wide variety of changes which they felt were significant. Although no clear pattern emerged, the transition from home to school or employment, and the adjustment to their disability (in those cases where this occurred later in life) were of importance.

Of the factors the panelists described as most important in helping them get and keep a job, the professionals in the audience almost unanimously agreed that the individual's motivation was the most important factor.

Consistent with the responses above, the professionals felt that encouraging the individual's motivation, sense of self-determination, and a strong self-esteem should be the focus of counseling sessions.

4. The video tape confirmed and clarified impressions and recollections. It also afforded the trainer the opportunity to review and critique his facilitation methods and skills.

### **Trainer's Observations**

This training model is unique in at least two ways. Utilizing persons with disabilities who are successfully employed as trainers, caught and held the attention of those who attended the training workshop. It helps avoid the difficulties presented by making lists of problems and prioritizing a list of solutions. It also avoided the "talking heads" syndrome.

Although the evaluation results do not objectively identify long range changes, we do know that at least one state has adopted this model for training of professional staff. Also, many other administrators and practitioners are talking about successful employment outcomes which is the bottom line for state rehabilitation agencies.



## **ATTACHMENT 5**

### **TRAINING SEMINAR**

#### **Characteristics of Successfully Employed Blind Persons**

**Presented To:** Rehabilitation Counselors, Teachers, Supervisors, and Administrators of the Minnesota Department of Blind Services

June, 1995

St Paul, MN

**Trainer:** Gil Johnson, Director, AFB West, San Francisco, CA

#### **Instructional Objectives:**

- To examine the characteristics of successfully employed blind persons in order to give Counselors techniques and skills to help consumers seeking employment focus their attention on those attitudes and behaviors; and
- To help rehabilitation counselors identify and cultivate strengths and self-esteem in their clients and to help clients master negative attitudes and behaviors.

#### **Training Methodology**

Approximately 35 rehabilitation counselors, teachers, supervisors, and administrators participated in this 1 1/2-day training session. The trainer gave one of four presentations and led a discussion focusing on the above objectives. The content of the presentation was based upon an article published in the January, 1995, issue of the Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness News Service entitled, "A Focus Group on Employment". The trainer served as group facilitator with the employed persons participating in that focus group. This was followed by small group discussions throughout the remainder of the training conference.

#### **Evaluation Methodology**

The training conference was evaluated in two ways. Immediately following

the training conference, participants were asked to evaluate each presentation with regard to the value of the material presented and the quality of the presentation. A longer range objective established by the agency focused greater attention on employment preparation and employment outcomes.

### **Evaluation Outcomes**

Approximately 90% of the participants completed the evaluation questionnaire. Nearly all (95%) rated the material presented by the trainer as relevant or extremely relevant to their work. The presentation was rated as very good to excellent.

The longer range objective established by the Minnesota Services for the Blind to increase the focus on employment preparation and outcomes is more difficult to quantify. They have reported increases in employment outcomes subsequent to the training conference. This accomplishment cannot be attributed solely to the training conference or the presentation by the trainer in this project.

## ATTACHMENT 6

### TRAINING SEMINAR Issues Affecting Employment of Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired

**Presented To:** Rehabilitation professionals attending the Arizona Chapter Meeting of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER)

October, 1995

Tucson, AZ

**Trainer:** Gil Johnson, Director, AFB West, San Francisco, CA

#### **Instructional Objectives:**

- To understand the potential impact of pending national legislation and possible funding implications on employment services for persons who are blind or visually impaired,
- To understand the implications of the technology explosion and the increased use of graphical displays,
- To examine "Best Practices and Exemplary Programs" as successful program models, and
- To discuss critical issues identified at the AFB-sponsored Employment Summit.

#### **Training Methodology**

Approximately 40 rehabilitation professionals attending the annual chapter meeting of the Arizona AER participated in this 90-minute training and discussion workshop. A portion of the material presented was based on an article in the JVIB News Service entitled, "Development of a National Agenda For Full Employment".

## **Evaluation Methodology**

Participants were asked to complete a brief evaluation for each workshop they attended. They were asked to evaluate each presentation with regard to the value of the material presented and the quality of the presentation.

## **Evaluation Outcomes**

Approximately 50% of the participants attending this training workshop completed the evaluation questionnaire. Nearly all (90%) rated the material presented by the trainer as relevant to their work. The presentation was rated as very good to excellent.

It is not possible, based on these evaluation results, to determine if the training has had any long-term impact on services offered or outcomes achieved. We were informed recently, however, that a 1e1/2-day training session was held which focused specifically on job placement and used successful program models and successfully employed persons who were blind.

**ATTACHMENT 7**  
**TRAINING SEMINAR**  
**Insights Forum**

**Presented To:** Corporate Human Resources Managers, Rehabilitation Professionals, and Access Technology Vendors

May, 1995

San Francisco, CA

**Trainers:** Carl Augusto, President, AFB, New York, NY  
Scott Marshall, Vice President, Governmental Relations, Washington, DC  
Gil Johnson, Director, AFB West, San Francisco, CA

**Instructional Objectives:**

1. To strengthen the relationship between the business community, the rehabilitation community, and AFB in order to reduce the high rate of unemployment among people who are blind or visually impaired. Four sub-purposes were:
  - To assist employers in retaining employees who are losing their vision,
  - To assist employers that are downsizing to reassign employees who are blind or visually impaired,
  - To assist employers in recruiting qualified people who are blind or visually impaired, and
  - To help the rehabilitation community have a more realistic understanding of the demands of today's labor market.
2. For the corporate community to consider what political action, if any, it may wish to take given the 104th Congress' vision of ADA, affirmative action, employment consolidation, unfunded mandates, returning power to the states, etc.

## **Training Methodology**

The training was provided at a meeting to which corporate human resource managers, rehabilitation professionals, and access technology vendors were invited. Following the breakfast, three presentations were given, followed by a question and answer session. The training forum concluded with roundtable discussions. The topics of the three presentations were:

- The national employment outlook for persons who are blind or visually impaired;
- Pending legislation affecting employment and strategies that may influence this legislation; and
- Resources for recruiting employees who are blind or visually impaired and, services available to employers and employees.

Information for this last presentation was drawn from a handbook developed specifically for the forum entitled, "An Employer's Guide For Recruiting, Hiring, Accommodating, Retaining or Promoting Employees Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired". (See Attachment 13).

## **Evaluation Methodology**

The evaluation of this forum assessed the extent to which representatives of both corporations and rehabilitation agencies participated. Three measures were used:

1. The number of individuals, corporations, and organizations attending the forum;
2. The extent to which attendees participated in the question and answer period and in the subsequent roundtable discussions; and
3. The extent to which participants indicated an interest in pursuing activities and exploring employment issues subsequent to the forum.

## Evaluation Outcomes

Seventy persons attended the Breakfast Forum including:

- Nine corporations represented by 29 human resources managers and other personnel;
- Twenty-five rehabilitation professionals (i.e., rehabilitation counselors, teachers, and administrators);
- Six technology access vendors; and
- Ten presenters, support personnel, etc.

Many substantive questions from participants followed the presentation. However, time did not permit taking all questions submitted by the participants. There were lively and involved discussions before and during the meal and following the responses to submitted questions after the presentations.

Several participants from corporations volunteered suggestions and legislative contacts during the question and answer portion of the forum. We do not know if any of the participants followed up with their expressed interests in contacting legislators. As a result of the forum, two corporations are distributing their job notices to several of the rehabilitation personnel who were present. We do not know if this has resulted in any job placements.

## **ATTACHMENT 8**

### **TRAINING SEMINAR Can Full Employment be Achieved for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired by the Year 2002?**

**Presented To:** Members and guests attending the annual convention of the American Council of the Blind (ACB)

July, 1995

Greensboro, NC

**Trainer:** Gil Johnson, Director, AFB West, San Francisco, CA

#### **Instructional Objectives:**

- To discuss 10 critical issues affecting unemployment of persons who are blind or visually impaired which were identified at the AFB-sponsored Employment Summit in January, 1995;
- To discuss characteristics of successfully employed persons who are blind; and
- To explore strategies suggested by the characteristics of successfully employed persons who are blind with regard to the ten critical issues.

#### **Training Methodology**

Approximately 200 members of the ACB and their friends and guests attending a general session of the annual ACB meeting heard this presentation. Following the general session, the trainer had one-to-one and small group discussions regarding this topic and possible ways in which ACB and its members might have an impact on the high unemployment rate. A portion of the material presented was based on two articles published in the JVIB News Service entitled, "A Focus Group on Employment" and "Development of a National Agenda for Full Employment".

## **Evaluation Methodology and Outcomes**

Given the size of the audience and the fact that this was one of several presentations, it was determined that asking participants to complete an evaluation form following the presentation or asking participants to complete a mailed evaluation questionnaire was not feasible.

The presentation was accurately summarized in ACB's publication "The Braille Forum". Several persons attending the presentation have asked for information and reprints of the JVIB articles. Although the organization has not adopted specific strategies to address the issues presented, it is clear that there is a heightened awareness of the issues and the value of focusing on the strategies utilized by persons who are successfully employed.

## **ATTACHMENT 9**

### **TRAINING SEMINAR Career Exploration and Use of AFB's Careers and Technology Information Bank (CTIB) as a Source of Mentors and Role Models**

**Presented To:** Young adults participating in agency-based rehabilitation programs and universities

March and June, 1995

Los Angeles, CA; Austin, TX; and Little Rock, AR

**Trainer:** Mark Uslan, Manager, Technical Evaluation Services,  
AFB, New York

#### **Instructional Objectives:**

- To assist blind and visually impaired young adults to explore career options and to become familiar with the potential of utilizing mentors and role models selected from AFB's Careers and Technology Information Bank.

#### **Training Methodology**

In March and June of 1995, five workshops were conducted at the following sites:

- Foundation for the Junior Blind, Los Angeles, CA;
- Braille Institute, Los Angeles, CA;
- Texas Commission for the Blind, Austin, TX;
- Texas School for the Blind, Austin, TX; and
- Lions World Services for the Blind, Little Rock, AR.

The objective of the workshops was to provide participants with the information needed to get career planning advice from the CTIB members working in their field of interest.

The agenda for the workshop included the following activities:

1. At the start of each workshop, participants were given an explanation of the CTIB (i.e., what it is and how they can use it, the CTIB job list, a summary of the variety of jobs held by CTIB members).
2. Participants were asked to discuss their career interests. Those who had difficulty specifying an interest were asked to discuss hobbies, skills, abilities, and general interests.
3. The workshop leader encouraged interaction and discussion, and asked questions designed to focus the discussion on work, training for work, career planning, and getting a job. Whenever possible, the CTIB job list was used to highlight members who are working in fields identified by participants.
4. The workshop leader asked each participant for the following information: name, level of visual function (blind or low vision), and career interest.

The following guidelines were given to the program administrator/ liaison prior to each workshop:

1. It is advantageous to limit the size of the workshop to under 10 participants, and the length to under 1 hour. Additionally, it is important that one staff person sit in on the workshop and coordinate follow-up. Participants will be told that they will be given a CTIB member to call. Within 7 days of the workshop the staff person will receive the names of CTIB members to distribute. The role of the staff person is to distribute those names in a timely manner, make arrangements for phone calling, and encourage workshop participants to make the calls.

### **Evaluation Methodology**

Within 3 weeks of the workshop, the assigned staff was to be contacted and asked to provide follow-up feedback on each participant (i.e., whether they contacted the CTIB member and the results of the contact).

### **Evaluation Outcomes**

#### ***Foundation for the Junior Blind, Los Angeles, CA***

Participants. Fourteen adults (age 18-56) participated from the Vocational Independence Program, a comprehensive residential and day program for newly blind young adults who need help to develop independent living and vocational skills.

Four of the 14 participants made contact with CTIB referrals and all four had positive phone experiences. Another four participants attempted to reach the CTIB referral but were not able to make contact. The other six participants did not attempt to reach the CTIB referral. The program coordinator stated she felt that the low usage of the CTIB was due to the fact that most students are in the early pre-vocational stage and were not ready to take the initiative to use the CTIB.

### ***Braille Institute, Los Angeles, CA***

Participants. Six adults (age 20-63) participated from the Career Services Learning Center Program, a 20-week program stressing adjustment skills, access technology, and preparation for the job search.

Of the six participants, four made contact with the CTIB referrals and all four contacts were characterized as positive. Of the two who did not, one tried but could not reach the referral and one did not make an attempt to reach the referral.

### ***Texas Commission for the Blind, Austin, TX***

Participants. Seven adults (age 25-50) participated, six of whom were recent graduates from the University of Texas. Each participant had been contacted and interviewed before the workshop and CTIB referrals were distributed to each participant at the workshop.

Six of the seven participants made contact with the CTIB referrals and in each case, the contact was characterized as positive. The one client who did not make contact secured employment shortly after the workshop. The Commission counselor reported very positive feedback from all seven participants. She attributed the positive feelings to the timing of the workshop -- all participants were engaged in a job search. The CTIB was viewed by each of the seven as a natural way of networking with people who had succeeded in careers they were interested in entering. The counselor plans to repeat the CTIB workshop in the future.

### ***Texas School for the Blind, Austin, TX***

Participants. Twelve students (grades 7-10) participated from the summer work experience program. The students held part-time jobs and attended classes where they discussed their experiences.

Five of the students made contact with the CTIB referrals. Four of the five contacts were characterized as positive. The negative contact was with a CTIB member who was hard of hearing. The student had difficulty communicating with the person. After making contact with the CTIB member, each student made a presentation to the rest of the class.

### ***Lions World Services for the Blind, Little Rock, AR***

Participants. This workshop included twenty-nine adults of whom 23 (age 18-30) are in the pre-vocational program. The length of the program depends on individual needs and averages between 1-4 months. The other six adults (age 17-18) are in the 2-month pre-college program.

Of the 23 participants in the pre-vocational program, 10 made contact with CTIB referrals (six by phone and four by mail). All 10 contacts were characterized as positive.

In regard to the six pre-college participants, the Lions World Services coordinator stated that, "This was an atypical college preparatory group as seen at LWSB in the summer in that there seemed to be a general lack of motivation throughout the summer in many areas." Of the six, one made contact with a CTIB referral. The contact was characterized as positive.

### **Trainer's Conclusions and Recommendations**

1. Timing of the workshop increases the probability of success. The best results were obtained when participants were either preparing for a job search, actively involved in a job search, or involved in a work experience program.
2. When participants are motivated to contact the CTIB referral, the contact is almost always characterized as positive.
3. It is desirable to interview participants before the workshop so that names of CTIB contacts can be brought to the workshop. Alternatively, a laptop computer could be brought to the workshop to conduct database searches.
4. It would be useful to have direct feedback from participants, especially in regard to the results of the CTIB contacts.

## ATTACHMENT 10

### TRAINING SEMINAR

#### Employment Outlook - 1996 to 2010:

#### What are the Opportunities for Today's Visually Impaired Youth?

**Presented To:** Students who are blind or visually impaired, teachers, counselors, parents, university faculty, and other participants attending the Discovery '95 -- The Third Low Vision Conference

October, 1995

Chicago, IL

**Trainers:** Karon Walker, Director, AFB Southeast, Atlanta, GA  
Patricia Beattie, Director, Public Policy, National Industries for the Blind, Alexandria, VA  
Eileen Hudson, Past President, National Association for Parents of the Visually Impaired  
Joseph Heniff, Self-Employed Attorney, Chicago, IL

#### Training Objectives:

- To give parents of children and youths who are blind or visually impaired an overview of trends in the overall job market, and information on the experiences of each presenter.

#### Specific Topics Included:

- Overall trends in the labor market,
- Resources available through the American Foundation for the Blind;
- Federal legislation,
- The changing focus of the National Industries for the Blind,
- Personal experience as a visually impaired person and as a parent of two visually impaired children,
- Importance of specialized services in school programs for visually impaired children as a key to success,
- Importance of networking with other blind and visually impaired persons and with other parents,
- Employment experiences in the federal and private sector,
- Impact that losing additional vision after entering the workplace had

- on one individual's career, and  
Services available through state vocational rehabilitation agencies.

### **Evaluation Methodology and Outcomes**

A brief questionnaire was developed and distributed during the session. Because of the size of the group and the accommodations, it was not possible to complete this evaluation. The room was set up to accommodate 20 participants. By starting time, over 40 people were present. The attendance reached 52; others were turned away due to lack of space. It should be noted that this session was scheduled to last 1 and 15 minutes. However, more than half the participants stayed for another 45 minutes with questions. Subsequently, a number of the participants have contacted one or more of the presenters to get more information.

## **ATTACHMENT 11**

### **"A Focus Group on Employment" By Charles E. Young, Administrator Oregon Commission for the Blind**

#### **Reprint of JVIB News Service Article January/February, 1995**

Why are some people who are blind consistently better at getting a job and advancing their careers when most people--blind or sighted--have such difficulty? What does this creative minority know that could help rehabilitation agencies counsel their clients? To answer these questions, on May 26, 1994, the Oregon Commission for the Blind sponsored a focus group of successfully employed people who are blind at the Portland headquarters. Group members (with the facilitator, Gil Johnson, Director of the American Foundation for the Blind West) described the factors that make them employable and offered recommendations for rehabilitation agencies.

#### **Group Members**

The group consisted of nine blind Oregonians who had a history of being employed in satisfying jobs for extended periods. Some were totally blind, others legally blind, and some had multiple disabilities. Congenitally blind and adventitiously blind participants were included. Most came from strong families, although one reported being raised by state institutions and one reported having little parental support. The following careers were represented: retail store owner, government manager and investor, school teacher, fast-food worker, marketing specialist, social worker, clerical specialist, advocate, and preschool owner-teacher.

All the participants had in common several characteristics that advanced their careers. The most important were positive attitudes about life and career prospects, adaptation to the sighted world, proficiency in alternative techniques to function without sight, and the use of mentors and role models.

#### **Attitudes**

##### **"We don't blame everybody else"**

Group members expressed extremely positive attitudes toward life and held

high expectations of themselves, which were often reinforced by their families and friends. They believed that employment was expected of adults and that dependency on public assistance was unacceptable for them. Being employed was a part of their pride and self-respect.

Members described themselves as spiritual people whose well-formed values gave them inner strength. They took responsibility for everything that happened in their lives, instead of blaming agencies, the government, or society for problems.

### **"You want to be passionate about your work"**

It was pointed out that to be successful, a person must choose employment that has personal relevance. They agreed that work has to be considered worthwhile for a person to feel successful, and a person must be excited about the prospects of a new challenge in order to advance. As one participant put it, "You want to be running to your next career, not running from your current job."

## **Adaptation to the Sighted World**

### **"They are not going to rearrange the world for you"**

The participants recognized that they live in a sighted world and that blind people must adapt to that world, not vice versa. Participants believed that blind people need to identify what and how they can contribute to an employer and to take responsibility to educate the employer about their abilities. They reported anticipating the questions employers might have regarding their competence or how they could accomplish a specific job-related task and overcoming a potential employer's objections during the initial contact.

### **"Blindness is a characteristic of you, not you"**

Members also emphasized the importance of developing common interests with coworkers. They related the value of participating in leisure activities with sighted people, which can be used to create a common interest with employees or employers. The group agreed that blindness needs to become a secondary characteristic of a person or the person will not be accepted. Group members reported developing a comfortableness about themselves, which gave them the ability to fit into social situations in the sighted world.

## **Alternative Techniques**

### **"You have to develop alternate skills to function"**

Mastery of blindness-related alternative techniques was cited by all as critical to their success. Learning to travel and becoming literate through Braille were the essential skills most frequently mentioned. Mastering techniques that make a blind person competitive with sighted people was reported to be key to self-esteem and self-reliance.

## **Role Models and Mentors**

### **"Most of us get jobs because someone else believes in us"**

Blind and sighted role models and mentors were often mentioned as critical to enabling people to be confident and challenged to higher expectations. Meeting other competent blind people or having business mentors enabled this group to believe in themselves and to develop appropriate expectations. All concurred that blind role models had an influence on their self-worth just by the observation that another blind person was doing something they wanted to do. The participants estimated, however, that because so many blind students are mainstreamed into regular classrooms, about 70% do not have access to blind role models.

## **Recommendations**

The results of the focus group discussion yielded some concrete guidelines for improving the employment prospects of blind people. Agencies for the blind, as well as vision professionals and blind individuals, can benefit from the advice of this group when identifying factors for helping blind adults gain employment and advance in their careers.

## **Challenge Attitudes and Expectations**

According to the group, rehabilitation agencies should establish an environment of "open-ended" challenge that would foster the maximum growth and highest level of functioning of their clients. Challenging activities such as woodworking, white-water rafting, and skiing can help blind people realize their potential and change their stereotypes about what it means to be blind. Because people are most responsive to the expectations of loved ones, agencies should also focus on educating family members about the capabilities of blind people.

## **Help Clients Adapt to the Sighted World**

Agencies should encourage their clients to consider the sighted person's perceptions in order to better understand an employer's concerns or objections. Counselors at rehabilitation agencies need to be honest and realistic with their clients. Consumer organizations, advisory boards, and blind role models should be used to provide "reality therapy".

## **Teaching Adaptive Skills**

Skills such as reading Braille and traveling with a cane should be taught to a level of mastery. Staff at rehabilitation agencies should be encouraged and trained to provide clients with a continuum of skills and challenges that will ensure that clients are given the opportunity to explore their full potential. The group also stressed the importance that competent, well-trained, and challenging teachers play in the development of self-confidence.

## **Provide Role Models and Mentors**

The group recommended that more programs involving role models be developed, such as the "Living with Blindness" seminars sponsored by the Oregon Commission for the Blind, which provides group outings in which clients can have access to blind role models. Agencies should work with educators to develop mentors for blind youth and newly blinded adults. All group members were willing to serve as role models.

## **Final Thoughts**

The positive energy from the focus group members made it easy to understand why they experience such career success. Their personalities and ability to get along with others were keys to that success. All nine were considered successful because they were doing what they wanted to do. As the facilitator observed, "They were each directing their lives, which could be the definition of independence."

## ATTACHMENT 12

### "Development of A National Agenda For Full Employment" By Gil L. Johnson, Director, AFB West

#### Reprint of JVIB News Service Article July/August, 1995

In January, 1995, the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) convened an "Employment Summit" of 25 leaders from the public and private sectors-- including human resource managers, consumers, and government policy experts-- to analyze employment preparation and job development systems for persons who are blind or visually impaired in the United States and Canada. Fifteen major issues were identified as being most important and having the greatest possibility for change. They were subsequently condensed into 10 critical issues which fall into two categories. The first category covers the issues most affected by factors external to the rehabilitation system. The second category encompasses those most under the control and influence of that system.

At the 1995 Josephine L. Taylor Leadership Institute (JLTLI), the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Work Group used the critical issues to begin developing a national agenda to achieve full employment for persons who are blind or visually impaired.

### Critical Issues and Questions

#### Category 1

The five critical issues are affected by external factors (such as the formulation of broad public policy, dissemination of public information, structuring of private and public employment systems, and creation of information resources) are:

1. Partnerships between the corporate sector and rehabilitation consumers and providers. These partnerships must be maximized so the needs of employers and the capabilities of workers with visual impairments can be fully realized.

#### Question:

How can consumers and service providers know the needs of employers, and how can employers effectively communicate their employment needs in an

ever-changing environment?

2. The basis for public policies. Public policy must be based on relevant, uniform demographic data.

Question:

How can timely and reliable demographic information regarding the population and relevant sub-populations of blind and visually impaired persons of working age be obtained?

3. National public education programs. These programs must promote a positive change in the public's understanding and awareness of people who are blind or visually impaired as individuals who have the abilities and skills to work in society as full participants.

Question:

How can the general public's attitudes and awareness of the capabilities and achievements of blind and visually impaired persons as employees be fundamentally changed for the better?

4. Work incentives. Public policies must provide incentives to work, rather than disincentives.

Questions:

How can public policy be revised to remove disincentives to accepting entry-level jobs posed by the real or potential loss of financial and medical benefits? How can conflicts between eligibility requirements and program outcomes be removed within public policies?

5. Access to information through technology. Visually impaired and blind citizens must have equal access, with their sighted peers, to information through technology.

Questions:

How can access to electronically generated and stored information be assured and improved, given graphical displays and the use of mouse-driven and touch screen displays? How can the availability of access technology together with training in its use become more timely?

## Category 2

Resolution of the five critical issues related to factors more directly under the influence of the rehabilitation and consumer system will require changes within the rehabilitation system. (The rehabilitation system is broadly defined to encompass several overlapping sub-systems including consumer organizations, public and private rehabilitation agencies, and university training programs of service providers.)

The five critical issues are:

1. Personnel preparation and in-service training programs. The programs must be reality-based and produce qualified and competent personnel to deliver rehabilitation services with a positive attitude.

Questions:

What actions will ensure that university training programs of vocational rehabilitation professionals place adequate emphasis on implications of blindness, realities of the labor market, and the role of the professional in job placement? What actions will ensure that professionals maintain an accurate and current understanding of employment requirements in a dynamically changing labor market?

2. Service provision within the vocational rehabilitation system. Vocational rehabilitation services must focus on employment outcomes.

Questions:

What actions will counter the tendency of the rehabilitation system to overemphasize service delivery and underemphasize integration, independence, and employment? How can adequate funding for job placement programs targeted for persons who are blind or visually impaired be obtained and assured? How can communication linkages between rehabilitation agencies and consumer organizations be made more efficient?

3. Self-advocacy and leadership skills, risk-taking, and personal responsibility. Throughout the rehabilitation process, consumers must be trained and encouraged to develop self-advocacy and leadership skills, to learn to take risks, and to assume responsibility for themselves.

Questions:

How can leadership within the blindness community be further developed? How can informed choice and a willingness to take risks be encouraged and modeled? How can the tendency of the blind community to be re-active rather than pro-active be reversed?

4. Career education programs and occupational information. In order to foster work expectations and to achieve career goals, all children, youth, parents, and adults with visual disabilities must be supplied information about career education programs and pertinent occupational opportunities.

Questions:

How can blind children and youth be assured adequate career information and training related to work attitudes and behaviors during their elementary, secondary, and postsecondary school years? How can blind or visually impaired job-seekers obtain and maintain accurate information regarding the demands of a dynamically changing labor market?

5. Ongoing training and development. In response to labor market demands, rehabilitation systems must provide ongoing training, skill development, and resources for consumers and their employers.

Question:

How can all blind or visually impaired job-seekers be provided with core employment skills and ongoing follow-up services?

## **Conclusion**

Whether the issues will finally be addressed in a significant way--that is, through "systems change" rather than fine-tuning existing approaches--depends on whether the field creates action plans that accurately analyze and effectively target the vehicles for change in the relevant systems.

To move toward a national agenda with measurable objectives, specific activities and timelines will require collaborative effort among public and private rehabilitation and education agencies and organizations, as well as consumers, government policy makers, and the business and corporate community. This effort is even more urgent now with the increasing momentum for consolidation of employment services and a "one-stop shopping" approach to service delivery.

The above critical issues can be stated in terms of goals and serve as the basis for the development of a national agenda. Those who participated in the Employment Summit and the JLTLI VR Work Group, as well as others, have indicated a willingness to work together to develop a national plan to achieve full employment for persons who are blind or visually impaired. Much effort and talent will be needed to make this a reality. A national conference could be the setting in which we discuss this.

**If you are willing and able to participate in such an effort, please contact the author or John Maxson, Training Director, Mississippi State University, Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision, P.O. Drawer 6189, Mississippi State, MS 39762, (601) 325-2001.**

**Gil Johnson, Director, American Foundation for the Blind West, 111 Pine Street, Suite 725, San Francisco, CA 94111, (415) 392-4845.**

## ATTACHMENT 13

### **An Employer's Guide For Recruiting, Hiring, Accommodating, Retaining or Promoting Employees Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired**

**Developed by AFB Employment Program,  
Gil Johnson, Co-Chair  
September, 1995**

#### **A GOOD EMPLOYEE IS A GOOD EMPLOYEE**

A good employee possesses qualities of capability, conscientiousness, and productivity--qualities unrelated to physical attributes or disability.

Loss of sight does not mean loss of ability to work.

The employee who is blind will be able to get to work.

The employee who is blind will be able to find his/her way around your premises.

The employee who is blind will perform his/her job safely.

The employee who is blind will need little special training.

The employee who is blind will want to be monitored and corrected if he/she makes a mistake.

The worker who is blind will have few problems in getting along with his/her coworkers.

#### **There are advantages in hiring a person who is blind or visually impaired:**

1. The potential worker who is visually impaired often is better assessed and recommended than an unknown respondent to a classified advertisement.
2. Rehabilitation agencies often are able to fund on-the-job training opportunities for potential employees in order to evaluate work

performance. Additionally, rehabilitation agencies provide follow-up assistance.

3. In addition, rehabilitation agencies can:
  - a. assist with employer hiring incentives, such as targeted jobs tax credits;
  - b. survey the workplace to determine and analyze suitable jobs, and determine how visually impaired people can do them;
  - c. provide rehabilitation services for present employees who lose their sight; and
  - d. provide information on experiences of employees who have solved disability problems.

Source: American Foundation for the Blind

**PREFERRED TERMINOLOGY**  
(to be used when a disability is referred to)

disabled	NOT	crippled
people with disabilities	NOT	the disabled
uses a wheelchair	NOT	confined to a wheelchair
woman who has cerebral palsy	NOT	cerebral palsy victim
man who has polio	NOT	man who suffers from polio
has a specific learning disability	NOT	is learning disabled
people who are blind	NOT	the blind
people who are visually impaired	NOT	the visually impaired
people who are deaf	NOT	the deaf
people who are hearing impaired	NOT	the hearing impaired
people with epilepsy	NOT	epileptic

**Source: The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities**

## **RECRUITMENT**

An employer must provide equal opportunities for an individual with a disability to participate in the job application process and to be considered for a job. Reasonable accommodations must be provided, as needed, to assure that individuals with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in this process.

Appendix B of the Regulations of Title 1, 29 CFR Sec. 1630.d states, "Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects qualified individuals from discrimination on the basis of the disability." Discrimination is prohibited in regard to job application procedures, hiring, promotions, discharge, compensation, training, and other terms and conditions of employment.

The rules governing recruitment issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC-M-1A, 1992) are found at Appendix B, Title 1 Reg., CFR Sec. 1630.10. It provides the following:

The ADA does not require employers to undertake special activities to recruit people with disabilities. However, recruitment activities that have the effect of screening out potential applicants with disabilities may violate the ADA.

**Example:** If an interviewer conducts recruitment activity at a college campus, job fair, or other location that is physically inaccessible, or does not make its recruitment activity accessible at such locations to people with hearing or other disabilities, the Company may be liable if a charge of discrimination is filed.

### **Job Advertisements and Notices**

All job announcements, advertisements, and other recruitment notices that include specific job duties should include information on only the essential functions of the job. Specific information about essential functions will attract applicants, including individuals with visual impairments, who have appropriate qualifications.

## **Accessibility of Job Information**

The EEOC rules on accessibility of job information, Sec. 5.2 (Manual EEOC-M-1a, 1992, p. V-2) state:

Information about job openings should be accessible to people with different disabilities. The employer is not obligated to provide written information in various formats in advance, but should make it available in an accessible format on request.

**Example:** Printed job information should be made available, as needed, to persons with visual or other reading impairments. Preparing information in large print will help make it available to some people with visual impairments. Information can be recorded on a cassette or read to applicants with more severe vision impairments and those who have other disabilities which limit reading ability. Individuals with visual impairments may need assistance in filling out the employment application.

## **Interviewing People with Visual Disabilities**

In most respects, interviewing individuals with visual impairments is the same as interviewing individuals who are not visually impaired. In general, the interviewer should ask all applicants about their qualifications, experience, and skills for doing the job. A good rule of thumb is to make sure that all questions are job-related.

If the tasks are analyzed for a particular position, you may find that vision is not required for successful job performance. Remember that people who are classified as blind have varying degrees of vision; the majority of people designated as "legally blind" are not totally blind.

## **Pre-Employment Inquiries**

The ADA prohibits any pre-employment inquiries about a disability.

The EEOC rules, Sec. 5.5 (EEOC-M-1A, 1992, p. V-4) on ADA prohibitions on pre-employment medical inquiries about a disability is found at Appendix B of Title 1 Reg., 29 CFR Sec. 1630.13. It provides the following:

The prohibition is necessary to assure that qualified candidates are not

screened out because of their disability before their actual ability to do a job is evaluated. Such protection is particularly important for people with hidden disabilities who frequently are excluded, with no real opportunity to present their qualifications, because of information requested in application forms, medical history forms, job interviews, and pre-employment examinations.

The prohibition on pre-employment inquiries about disability does not prevent an employer from obtaining necessary information regarding an applicant's qualifications, including medical information. The ADA requires only that such inquiries be made in two stages of the hiring process: before making a job offer; and after making a conditional job offer; but before an individual starts work.

An individual with a visual impairment should not be required to take a pre-employment medical examination based solely on his/her disability. An employer can request a medical exam after a conditional offer of employment, but only if it is required of all individuals applying for the same type of position.

**NOTE:** Drug testing is not considered a pre-employment medical examination for purposes of ADA, and therefore is permissible before a conditional offer of employment.

If drug screening and medical examinations are required of all applicants who qualify for employment, make sure the associated forms are accessible for the individual who is visually impaired or blind. These forms may need to be put in large print, Braille, on tape, or have a staff member read the examination to the applicant.

Do not inquire as to whether or not the individual with a visual impairment has a valid driver's license unless driving is an "essential function" of the position he/she is seeking.

## THE JOB INTERVIEW

The EEOC ruling, Sec. 5.5f (EEOC-M-1A, 1992, p. V-10) regarding the job interview states the following:

An interviewer may not ask questions about a disability, but may obtain more specific information about the ability to perform job tasks and about any needed accommodations.

To assure that an interview is conducted in a nondiscriminatory manner, interviewers should be well informed about ADA's requirements. The employer may wish to provide written guidelines to people who conduct job interviews.

The job interview should focus on the ABILITY of an applicant to perform the job, not the disability.

The interviewer should be mindful of the following items during the job interview:

- \* The interview with the individual who has a visual impairment should be conducted in the same way as an interview with anyone else.
- \* Do not ask an individual with a visual impairment how he/she will get to work unless this is related to the essential job functions. If your company offers some form of vanpool or other transportation service to all employees, you should insure that it is accessible to individuals with disabilities and discuss it as you would with any other applicant.
- \* Do not inquire about any visible disabilities. It is only appropriate to ask if the individual can perform the functions of the job.
- \* If a person with a visual impairment needs assistance through a door or to a chair, let the person take your arm and follow the motion of your body. Guide his/her hand or arm to the back of the chair.
- \* Speak directly to the individual who is visually impaired or blind. Do not raise your voice. When you leave the room, say so.
- \* Do not be concerned if an individual with an obvious vision impairment does not make eye contact.
- \* Introduce other people in the room or have them introduce themselves. This will assist the individual in orienting himself/herself to the room and its occupants.

- \* Do not avoid using the words "look" and "see". There are no reasonable substitutes.
- \* When giving directions, do not use references a person cannot see..."over there" is not a good way of describing a location. When using directional words, use them with the orientation of the person who is blind. Remember, when you are facing someone, your left is that person's right.
- \* Do not attempt to pet a guide dog while it is in harness. It is up to the person using the dog guide to decide if play is appropriate.
- \* When you are guiding a person with impaired vision into a new or strange surrounding, you may want to describe special features or decorations.
- \* For people with visual impairments, provide a well lit area for the interview and avoid sharp contrast of light and dark areas. Bright light is difficult for some types of visual impairments.

Discussion of and training in the above points can be arranged by contacting agencies shown in the enclosed list of resources.

### **Inquiries Related to Ability to Perform Job Functions and Accommodations**

"An interviewer may obtain information on an applicant's ability to perform essential job functions and about any need for accommodation in several ways, depending on the particular job applicant and the requirements of a particular job". According to the rules issued by EEOC (EEOC-M-1A, Sec. 5.5f, 1992, p. V-10):

- \* The applicant may be asked to describe or demonstrate how he/she will perform specific job functions, if this is required of everyone applying for a job in this category, regardless of disability.
- \* However, if an applicant has a known disability that would interfere with or prevent performance of a job-related function, the employer can only ask the applicant to demonstrate how he/she would perform the function if all applicants in the job category are required to do so, regardless of disability.
- \* If an applicant indicates that he/she cannot perform an essential job function even with an accommodation, the applicant would not be qualified for the job in question.

## **Accommodations for Interviews**

The EEOC rules governing accommodations for interviews (EEOC-M-1A, Sec. 5.5f, 1992, p. V-15) state, "The employer must provide an accommodation, if needed, to enable an applicant to have equal opportunity in the interview process. The employer may find it helpful to state in an initial job notice, and/or on the job application form, that applicants who need accommodation for an interview should request this in advance."

Needed accommodations for interviews may include the following for individuals with disabilities including visual impairments:

- \* An accessible location for individuals with mobility impairments;
- \* A sign language interpreter for a person who is deaf or has both vision and hearing impairments.
- \* A reader for an individual with a visual impairment.

## **Testing**

The procedures outlined by EEOC (EEOC-M-1A, Sec. 5.6, 1992) in testing of applicants are found in the Appendix B of Title 1 Reg., ADA, 29 CFR Sec. 1630.11. It provides the following:

Employers may use any kind of test to determine job qualifications. The ADA has two major requirements in relation to tests:

If a test screens out or tends to screen out an individual with a disability or a class of such individuals on the basis of disability, it must be job-related and consistent with business necessity.

- \* The ADA requires that tests be given to people who have impaired sensory, speaking, or manual skills in a format and manner that does not require use of the impaired skill, unless the test is designed to measure that skill. (Sensory skills include the abilities to hear, see, and process information.)
- \* An employer is not required to offer an applicant the specific accommodation requested. This request should be given primary consideration, but the employer is only obligated to provide an effective accommodation.

## **Some Examples of Alternative Test Formats and Accommodations for Individuals with Visual Impairments:**

- \* Administering a test in large print, Braille, recorded, or on a computer that has accessible output;
- \* Allowing people who have limited use of their hands to record test answers by tape recorder, dictation, or computer;
- \* Substitute an oral test for a written test.
- \* Provide extra time to complete a test.
- \* Where it is not possible to test an individual with a visual impairment in an alternative format, an employer may be required, as a reasonable accommodation, to evaluate the skill or ability being tested through some other means, such as an interview, education, work experience, licenses or certification, or a job demonstration for a trial period.

## **IMPORTANT FACTORS DURING THE INITIAL STAGES OF EMPLOYMENT**

Many employers have found that scheduling awareness training for other employees prior to the first day of employment of a person who is blind or visually impaired alleviates many fears and apprehensions. Questions such as, "How will the blind person get around?" or "What should I say to him/her?" and the like can be dealt with at this time. Usually, this sensitivity training need not take more than 45 minutes to an hour. Such training can be arranged by contacting appropriate agencies from the list of resources.

The first day on the job is always an emotional experience for everyone. Show the visually impaired individual any extra consideration that may be needed until he/she gets properly oriented. Demonstrate a positive work atmosphere and clearly communicate specific expectations. Take extra steps to ease the new employee's assimilation into the unit. Provide the same supervision on a continuing basis that you provide all your employees.

Work with your employee on an individual development plan and career counseling for upward mobility. Guiding an employee in growth and development can be the most challenging and rewarding aspect of a manager's duties. The successful growth and development program for an individual with a visual impairment should include the following:

- \* To ensure the newly hired applicant with a visual impairment is a part of the team, he/she should be treated in the same manner as a non-disabled new hire.
- \* Once a blind or visually impaired person has been hired, learning how to get around the work site is very important. State and private rehabilitation agencies have orientation and mobility instructors who can come to the place of employment and help this individual learn how to travel around the work site, prior to beginning employment.
- \* Allow the new employee to have the opportunity to touch things as they go along and listen to the sounds, and provide descriptive information about his/her surroundings.
- \* To accommodate the visually impaired employee and any equipment necessary to perform the job effectively, remember to give careful consideration to available floor space as well as the following:

1. The location of the employee's desk,

2. The location and availability of electrical outlets,
3. The accessibility of necessary equipment,
4. Available lighting, and
5. Possible safety hazards.

\* If the new employee has a guide dog, there are several things to be considered:

1. Are any of the current employees afraid of or allergic to dogs? If so, this should be determined before deciding on a seating arrangement.
2. Can the employee access his/her desk easily?
3. Is there enough space for the dog?
4. Consistent break and lunch schedules should be arranged for the new employee. This will allow the dog the convenience it needs for relief purposes.

\* If reader assistance is needed, often support staff may be assigned to assist as a reasonable accommodation.

\* Memoranda and correspondence can be recorded on cassette tape or accessed via computer disk if speech, large print, or Braille software is provided as a reasonable accommodation.

\* If the newly hired blind or visually impaired employee is not doing his/her job, take the same corrective action that would be taken for any employee. Do not be afraid to discharge or discipline the person just because he/she is blind.

\* Do not permit coworkers, supervisors, or managers to treat the visually impaired employee any differently than they do sighted employees. If the stapler is empty, show the employee where staples are stored and how to fill the stapler. The blind or visually impaired employee should be required to make coffee and keep the lunch area clean just as other employees do.

\* Work with an employee who is visually impaired as you would any employee in developing a career advancement plan.

The concept of reasonable accommodation does not apply only to selection and placement. It also is considered in recruitment and development assignments. In order to give employees with visual impairments the opportunity to attend formal training programs, employers may be able to use training funds for special services such as sign language interpreters, readers, and braille or taping of course materials. If an individual with a visual impairment can perform the essential functions of the job, often the non-essential functions can be exchanged with another employee. The employee with a visual impairment can help this employee with some of his/her job assignments.

## **ACCOMMODATING EMPLOYEES WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

Providing accommodations which enable employees who are blind or visually impaired to perform essential job functions is not only required under the Americans with Disabilities Act, but it is good personnel practice. Many employers have taken this approach with all their employees and have seen the benefits of doing so. Often, the accommodations require little more than slight adjustments in work assignments or work hours, modifications to the work station, necessary equipment, and the like. On occasion, accessible technology and other modifications are necessary. Experience clearly demonstrates the wisdom in this approach as employees are happier, more productive, and more loyal. In addition, the accommodations often lead to better and more efficient ways in getting the job done.

Principles underlying providing reasonable accommodations for employees who are blind or visually impaired or with other disabilities include:

- \* A flexible attitude by management and supervisors regarding how tasks and assignments are completed coupled with clear expectations that assignments must be completed within specified timelines and within established standards.
- \* An individualized approach taking into account a clear understanding of the essential job functions and an objective assessment of the employee's capabilities and the limitations posed by the disability.
- \* The participation and cooperation of the employee, supervisor, and at times, coworkers.

There is often a concern that reasonable accommodations will be costly. A recent study of reasonable accommodations provided by Sears Roebuck Co. clearly

demonstrated this fear to be unfounded. According to the Sears study, two thirds of the 436 accommodations cost nothing. The average cost for all accommodations provided was \$121. A copy of this study may be obtained from the Annenberg Washington Program at (202) 393-7100.

Resources to assist in conducting a "job analysis", assessing the employee's needs, and selecting appropriate technology is available in the list of resources.

## **RETAINING EMPLOYEES WHO LOSE VISION WHILE EMPLOYED**

Individuals who develop a disability while employed, whether it is due to an injury or a medical problem, present a challenge. If the situation is handled well, the results can lead to beneficial outcomes for both the employer and employee.

If the loss of vision is caused by an accident or injury, the individual will react much as anyone would who experiences a traumatic loss. With understanding and support from management, supervisors, and coworkers, and perhaps some professional counseling through an Employee Assistance Program or other source, adjustment to the vision loss can be facilitated. An important factor is immediate and supportive intervention.

If loss of vision develops because of a medical condition, and particularly, if the reduction has been slowly progressive, the employee may not be aware of the change in vision for quite some time. When the individual is no longer able to ignore the visual change, he or she may face it directly or attempt to "hide" the fact from coworkers and supervisors. Performance may be negatively affected resulting in increased stress and pressure to "keep up". If the loss of vision is slowly progressive and does affect productivity, and if the supervisor is unaware of the change in visual status, a negative relationship between the supervisor and employee may develop. When the situation can be discussed candidly, alternatives can be considered. Understanding and support by the supervisor coupled with professional counseling are essential.

Of equal importance is an awareness that modifications can be made in the current job, or an alternative job assignment may be considered. Essential to this is the full participation of the employee, the supervisor, and perhaps management. Also, the projection of future visual status from the individual's physician will be important. The assistance of a Vocational Specialist who is knowledgeable about visual impairments and job modifications and assistive technology may be necessary. The employee may be reluctant for coworkers to know about the situation, consequently, confidentiality will need to be observed.

Factors which are important to help achieve a positive outcome with valued

employees who lose vision while employed include:

- \* early awareness of the change in visual status before job performance is negatively affected,
- \* candor between the employee and supervisor while recognizing that the employee may wish to maintain confidentiality,
- \* support from management and supervisors and a willingness to consider job modifications or reassignment,
- \* a realistic assessment of the employee's capabilities and limitations caused by the loss of vision,
- \* counseling from a professional who understands the impact of visual loss, and
- \* technical advice from a Vocational Specialist who is knowledgeable about job modifications and assistive technology.

If early identification and intervention occur and necessary professional assistance is available, the employee can continue to remain productive and maintain his/her independence and dignity; the employer will have a productive, happy, and loyal employee, and costly disability payments will be avoided.

### **ADA EVALUATION CHECKLIST**

1. Your employment policies (recruiting, hiring, upgrading, promotion, award of tenure, demotion, transfer, layoff, termination, right of return from layoff, and rehiring) should give nondiscriminatory treatment to applicants and employees with disabilities.
2. Your employment application forms should not contain questions as to whether an applicant is an individual with a disability.
3. Your employment practices should not limit, segregate, or classify job applicants or employees in ways that adversely affect the opportunities or status because of the disability of the applicant or employee.
4. Your employment practices should not allow you to participate in contractual or other arrangements or relationships that subject your qualified applicant or employee with a disability to discrimination (i.e.,

relationships with employment or referral agencies, labor unions, or organizations that provide fringe benefits, training, or apprenticeship programs).

5. Your employment practices should not use standards, criteria, or methods of administration that have the effect of discrimination on the basis of disability or that perpetuate the discrimination of others who are subject to common administrative control.
6. Your employment practices should give nondiscriminatory treatment to applicants and employees who have a close friend, associate, or family member with a disability.
7. Your employment practices should have a policy concerning "Reasonable Accommodation", including a process to decide at which point the reasonable accommodation causes an "undue hardship."
8. Your employment practices should have a procedure to document decisions not to hire or promote because of "undue hardship."
9. Your employment practices should insure that the requirements of your job (i.e., job descriptions, employment tests, or other selection criteria) include no criteria that would discriminate against an individual with a disability unless such criteria are related to the essential job functions and consistent with business necessity.
10. Your employment practices should insure that your hiring procedures (i.e., applying, testing, and interviewing for a job) are carried out in wheelchair accessible locations and in accessible formats, such as reader assistance, Braille, or audio recording for people with impaired vision; written materials or sign language interpreters for people with hearing impairments; and personal assistance for people with manual impairments.
11. Your employment practices should make sure that employment tests are selected and administered in a way to ensure that test results accurately reflect the skills or aptitude necessary to perform the job rather than reflect the impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills of the applicant or employee, unless the sensory, speaking, or manual ability is necessary to perform critical elements of the job.
12. Your employment practices should conform to the requirements of the law prohibiting inquiries as to the nature and severity of disabilities except as they are job-related.

13. Your personal policies and practices should ensure that an applicant or employee who is a recovering alcoholic or drug abuser (not currently using alcohol or drugs) is included within the law.
14. You should post equal employment opportunity notices in an appropriate, accessible format (i.e., in large print, Braille, and audio cassette).

Adapted from: Job Accommodation Network, ADA Evaluation Checklist and Guide Provided by the President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities.

## RESOURCES

### National

#### AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND (AFB)

11 Penn Plaza, Suite 300  
New York, NY 10001  
(212) 502-7636

Field Offices located in: Washington, DC; Atlanta, GA; San Francisco, CA; Chicago, IL; and Dallas, TX.

- \* **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES (ADA) CONSULTING GROUP:**  
AFB's ADA Consulting Group has developed a variety of information packages on provisions of the ADA concerning blindness and visual impairment. Known as ADA Solution Modules, each package includes an access accommodation checklist, how-to fact sheets, information about blindness and visual impairment, and a resource list for products to assist with ADA compliance.
  
- \* **CAREERS AND TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION BANK (CTIB):**  
A database of information obtained from interviews with over 1, 800 persons who are blind or visually impaired. Participants provide information about technology and adaptive equipment they use at work or at home. CTIB is an informal network for information exchange regarding assistive technology, education, and careers.
  
- \* **EMPLOYMENT AND BLINDNESS-RELATED PUBLICATIONS AND VIDEOS:**  
Various pamphlets, articles, journals, books, and videotapes regarding employment issues and information about blindness and visual impairments.

#### EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

1801 L Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20507  
(800) 669-3362

Provides regulations, technical manuals, and other information relating to Title I (employment) of the ADA.

JOB ACCOMMODATION NETWORK (JAN)

West Virginia University  
P.O. Box 6123  
Morgantown, WV 26505-9901  
(800) 526-7234

A service of the President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities, JAN is a consulting service/network providing information about job accommodations.

THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND (NFB)

1800 Johnson Street  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
(800) 638-7518

\* JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE BLIND (JOB)

NFB maintains a listing of referral services, selects and records job-related materials, and publishes, The Job Bulletin in cassette-recorded format available free to persons who are legally blind.

NATIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE FOR THE BLIND AND PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED

1291 Taylor Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20542  
(800) 287-5100

This program provides current books and magazines on tape and in Braille for individuals whose disability prevents the use of print materials.

STATE/FEDERAL VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Each state provides vocational rehabilitation services for persons who are blind or visually impaired or have other disabilities. For assistance in a particular locale, consult with the Telephone Directory Yellow Pages for listings of State Rehabilitation Services.