

Inservice Education: One Role of the Audiologist in Public Law 94-142

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Abstract

The role of the audiologist with respect to inservice education under Public Law 94-142 is discussed. Particular attention is paid to explaining how inservice education can provide any audiologist with a point of entry into educational systems that do not now employ audiologists. Specific guidelines are presented for the inservice education of parents as well as educational and administrative personnel. Pupil counseling is discussed as an additional service that an audiologist can provide under Public Law 94-142.

Since the education of handicapped children in the least restrictive environment places particular demands upon those individuals actively involved in their education, a comprehensive system of personnel development was built into Public Law 94-142 to insure its effectiveness. Central to this system is inservice education. This is defined in the regulations for implementation of PL 94-142 as "training other than that received by an individual in a full-time program which leads to a degree". (121a.382) Funds are available to the state and local education agencies for personnel development, but in order to obtain them, the procedures specified in the regulations must be followed.

The state and local education agency is required to first determine what inservice programs would assure implementation of the law through a formal needs assessment. The results of this needs assessment and the procedures to meet them must then be reported in the state's annual program plan. Section 121a.382 of the regulations specify this plan must:

1. Describe the process used in determining the inservice needs.
2. Identify the areas in which training is needed.

3. Specify the groups requiring training.
4. Describe the content and nature of the training.
5. Describe how the training will be provided in terms of geographical scope and staff source.
6. Specify the funding source and time frame for providing it, and,
7. Specify procedures for effective evaluation of the program's objectives.

The program plan thus insures the state educational agencies have an ongoing program of inservice training for those individuals actively involved in the education of handicapped children.

The target populations mentioned in the regulations include not only educational and administrative personnel, but also support staff and others involved in the education of handicapped children such as paraprofessionals, parents, surrogate parents and volunteers. In addition, the regulations make provisions for the state and local education agencies to grant attendance incentives to teachers. Those suggested are release time, payment for participation, options for academic credit, salary step credit, certification renewal, or updating of professional skills.

The law does not mandate that inservice education be provided from within the state or local education agency. The only requirement is that the inservice staff be from the surrounding geographical area. When necessary services cannot be provided from within the school system, the agency must contract for those services, including inservice education. The regulations are written so that contracts can be negotiated with both profit and non-profit organizations. (121a.382) However, private or public agencies that wish to be considered as a source for contractual agreements may need to have their program reviewed or evaluated by the state educational agency. Certification or accreditation may also be required. Dublinske and Healey (1978) suggest that persons in private practice review their state laws and regulations to determine exactly what procedures are required for providing contracted services. In some states private practitioners may need to seek revisions in, or interpretations of, state laws or regulations that allow local education agencies to contract with persons in private practice.

Before initiating any inservice workshop, it is imperative to determine the audience for whom a program of inservice education is designed and to outline the objectives of each meeting (Seltz, 1973). It is helpful to know what special services are already available within the school system and the nature and number of the existing support staff. Information about the number of hearing impaired children in the school system and their ability to use their residual hearing also assists the audiologist in determining instructional goals.

The success of any inservice workshop is dependent upon the motivation of the participants and the audiologist's leadership skills. The incentive provisions in Public Law 94-142 can insure attendance, but they cannot insure motivation. The content of the inservice must be important to the participants and the material must be presented in a fashion which keeps the audience intellectually, auditorily and visually interested. The audiologist must know when to initiate discussion and how to productively control it.

Prior to learning about hearing, hearing loss, and hearing aids, educational and administrative personnel need to gain the confidence and knowledge that they can communicate effectively with the hearing impaired child. Specific guidelines for speaking and listening to the hearing impaired child are, therefore, essential components of the initial inservice workshops. Seating considerations and the effects of noise upon speech intelligibility should be stressed as part of these guidelines. Although there are commercially available materials to demonstrate the effects of various degrees and patterns of hearing loss on speech and language intelligibility (*How They Hear*, Gordon Stowe Associates; *Getting Through*, Zenith Radio Corporation), homemade audio-tape materials are the most effective tools to demonstrate the effects of noise on classroom listening situations. Role playing of classroom problems and hands-on experience listening through hearing aids will also reinforce the importance of following these communication guidelines.

Inservice education by audiologists can also teach the educational personnel how to interpret otological and audiological reports so that the information can assist them in writing the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). When discussing the specifics of the auditory mechanism, hearing impairment and amplification systems, provide the audience with handouts to reinforce the terminology and basic concepts. Inservice education is a process which builds upon a base of information. The more firmly the audiologist can establish this base, the more the educational staff will realize how much they need to know about hearing loss before they can objectively assess a hearing impaired child's specific strengths and weaknesses in the classroom.

Similar inservice workshops with the parents of the hearing impaired children should do more than inform them about their child's handicap and special needs. The school system should encourage inservice education as a means for parents to become acquainted with law itself. This is essential to its success. Prior to direct involvement with Public Law 94-142 parents need to know the rights and obligations that the law gives them. It gives parents the right to participate in developing the IEP with the assistance of an interpreter, if necessary; the right to be informed in writing when any proposed action is to be taken; the right to examine and

have explained relevant records with respect to identification, evaluation and educational placement; the right to an independent evaluation when parents are not satisfied with the school district's IEP; the right to a due process hearing conducted by an impartial hearing officer when a disparity exists between the school and the independent agency's evaluation; and the right to utilize professional experts and the results of the independent evaluation at this hearing.

There are deficiencies in the due process rights given parents by Public Law 94-142 and parents must be made aware of them. First, there are no provisions for legal fees for those parents who cannot afford to retain legal counsel. Second, participation in the process by parents might require absence from employment and some loss of wages (Mulholland and Hourihan, 1977). Through inservice education parents can develop an action group to insure not only that Public Law 94-142 is implemented, but also that its deficiencies are rectified. The audiologist may need to persuade the school system to recognize the role they should have in informing parents about the law. By having the audiologist act as a parent advocate the school system can improve the services to their hearing impaired population in response to the concerns of their parents, rather than in response to litigation.

Through active involvement in staff and parent inservice education programs, the audiologist can become a highly visible and known entity to the administrative personnel of the state and local education agencies. In becoming known as the school system's expert on hearing, hearing loss and aural habilitation, the audiologist also becomes known as an important educational consultant. The frequency of inservice sessions to staff and parents depends on the needs of the particular school system. This should be discussed with the administrative personnel in advance so that the appropriate recommendations for personnel development can be written into the Public Law 94-142 personnel development plan for that particular year. In all situations one should attempt to insure that inservice education is an ongoing activity throughout the academic year. Continued followup is essential to gauge the effectiveness of the inservice training program. The initial inservice education focuses on basic, yet general information. Later inservices focus on specific problem areas. Since social and communication difficulties which occur at school can also occur at home, later inservices are most beneficial if parents and educational personnel meet together.

Although inservice education is defined in Public Law 94-142 in relation to personnel development, there are provisions in the law for an audiologist to provide counseling and guidance of pupils regarding their hearing loss. This is probably the most important type of inservice education that the audiologist can provide. Both the hearing impaired children and their normal hearing peers can

benefit from this type of inservice education. Hearing impaired children want, and need, to know about their hearing losses. They should know the parts of the ear and how sound travels through it. The Walt Disney filmstrip "You—and Your Ears" is an excellent audio-visual aid to explain this on a simple level. Children also want to know "Where their ear is broken and why it can't be fixed". They have a right to know about the types of hearing losses and what can be done for them. By helping these children become aware of the many aspects of communication, the audiologist also helps them put their hearing in its proper perspective. Their focus of attention must be changed from what they cannot do because of their hearing loss to what they can do in spite of it. Children once comfortable with the audiologist, are usually uninhibited about asking questions. Their questions will assist the audiologist in choosing situations to demonstrate communication skills.

Although integrated hearing impaired children may seem to be responsible and knowledgeable about their amplification, they most likely do not understand it and probably do not like it. Research indicates that at any one time a significant number of hearing aids worn by children are actually malfunctioning (Zink, 1972). Hearing impaired children need to learn about their personal amplification and how to care for it. When hearing impaired children in a group examine each others hearing aids they gain a greater understanding of their own. Most important, hearing impaired children need to know there are significant others outside of their family who care about the problems they encounter in hearing with and without amplification. A program of ongoing inservice education led by an audiologist can provide them with this support.

Seltz (1973) aptly describes normal hearing children's reaction to having a hearing impaired child in their class. Normal hearing peers can be the hearing impaired student's greatest support or more severe handicap. Hearing children are naturally curious about the hearing impaired child in their classroom. The more they know about his hearing aid and the things that can improve his communication, the better able they will be to understand, accept and help him. The same materials used with the hearing impaired children in their group counseling sessions should be used with their classmates, and the hearing impaired child should be encouraged to lead these discussions whenever possible.

One cannot help but agree with Testut and Baldwin (1977) that the role of audiologists will change in response to Public Law 94-142. Audiologists will continue to be responsible for audiological assessment and hearing aid evaluation, but in addition, they will be needed in educational settings to advise teachers, resource personnel and parents concerning the total habilitation of the hearing impaired child. What is debatable is whether audiologists should

provide these services to schools on a consultant basis, or whether they should aim for positions within the school system. In spite of one's personal views on this issue, the concern of all audiologists should be to insure that quality audiological services are provided now to mainstreamed hearing impaired children and their educators. Audiologists should not have to wait for positions to open in school districts in order to achieve this goal. The regulations for Public Law 94-142 provided the mechanism for any audiologist, regardless of their work setting, to be involved in the schools. Assisting the state and local education agencies with their personnel development needs is one way to gain entrance to the educational system without becoming a part of it. Contracting to do pupil counseling is another.

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