

**SECTION III**  
**Access to Programs and Services**



# Excellence in Career Counseling: Improving Services to Students Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing – A Video Project from El Camino College

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## Abstract

Postsecondary career counselors often are at a loss when it comes to interacting with and providing services to deaf and hard of hearing students. This is especially true for career counselors who have little or no previous contact with deaf and hard of hearing students. The lack of previous contact may be due to the low incidence of this population at respective campuses, geographic isolation, or no available independent living center services or Department of Rehabilitation services, as well as other factors. In order to address this serious issue, the Southern California Outreach Center at El Camino College, an affiliate program of the Western Region Outreach Center & Consortia (WROCC), developed and produced a short video targeting postsecondary career counselors to assist them with improving and providing their services. Funding was provided by WROCC.

## Production of Video

Several staff members at El Camino College met to discuss the need for improving career counseling services and brainstorm how this could be accomplished by a short video with brief related resource materials. The staff decided that information on deaf awareness and deaf culture should not be included in the video since excellent information is available elsewhere. They determined that the video would provide examples of successful deaf professionals as well as career counselors with experience in serving the deaf and hard of hearing students.

The program coordinator gathered pertinent materials and resource information, and also arranged for the producer to meet with key career counseling ex-

perts from local postsecondary institutions. A list of questions was prepared in advance of the meetings in order to obtain valuable insights and suggestions. A producer was selected, who later met with deaf and hard of hearing students to obtain their input about career planning and services as well as to ask for volunteers to appear in the video.

The program coordinator provided an outline for the producer who then wrote a video script. The program coordinator, the career counselor for students with disabilities, and the program director reviewed the script. The program director is also the Director of the college's Special Resource Center. The program coordinator and several faculty and staff members recommended appropriate students and faculty/staff for the video. The producer coordinated the final casting.

The producer, with the assistance of the program coordinator, arranged for filming locations and times. There were a few problems with finding an employer willing to participate, but these were overcome by creative editing. The program coordinator developed a brief pamphlet of resource materials to accompany the video. A list of references for information on deaf awareness and culture is included.

Copies of the video were sent to all participants as well as to the WROCC grantees and posted on the PEPNet Resource Center's web site and on the WROCC web site. Also, information was sent to professional career counseling organizations and to California postsecondary career counseling centers.

## Video Content

*Introduction:* Career counselors often have a modest amount of experience communicating, counseling, and providing resources to students who are deaf and hard of hearing. This is due to a variety of reasons, some of which are lack of exposure to this specific student population, inability to adequately communicate, lack of resources, and limited knowledge to basic cultural differences, which are an instrumental part of the success factor when working with deaf and hard of hearing students.

*Career Exploration:* A large percentage of deaf and hard of hearing students come to the postsecondary setting with minimal or no experience in career exploration. It is imperative that career counselors establish a relationship with the students and guide them to the vast opportunities and viable career choices that inter-

est them. Graphics depicting different careers and captioned occupational videos are often successful tools to introduce this concept. Deaf role models are also a positive influence for students. Often deaf or hard of hearing students have not yet worked with an advisor who has exposed them to these opportunities and resources.

*Job Search, Interview and Placement Strategies.*

Building a resume and completing the application process can pose challenges to many students. Lack of work experience, limited exposure to resume writing and the application process contribute to this. Career counselors working with deaf and hard of hearing students should be informed of potential difficulties with English comprehension and how this may contribute to challenges when trying to master writing a resume and filling out applications in proper English grammar format as opposed to the individual's native sign language.

Career centers should promote participation in resume writing workshops and mock interview groups. Working one-on-one or in group settings to prepare resumes, practice interview techniques and prepping the interpreter (if applicable) are contributors to student success. Encourage students who are deaf or hard of hearing to take advantage of the job placement center on campus to compare their resume with examples utilized there. On-campus interviews, job shadowing, and internships on- and off-campus should be incorporated into the student's career plan.

*Employer Events.* "Career Days" and "Job Fairs" are common occurrences on most campuses. Making these events accessible to deaf and hard of hearing students is essential, however it is not enough to merely provide sign language interpreters for communication access. Identify employers who have experience hiring deaf and hard of hearing employees and encourage them to participate in the event. Coordinate panel presentations consisting of employers, employees, and other key personnel; utilize student tours and internships at various companies and organizations that hire deaf and hard of hearing personnel.

Increasing student interest and ensuring attendance to these events can be a challenge. Often deaf students do not attend campus events because they are under the assumption that they will not be able to communicate with the vast majority of participants and perspective employers. Outreach and advertisement is crucial. Flyers and other forms of advertisements should be clear and visually stimulating in order to capture the deaf student's interest.

*Communication:* Communication is everybody's responsibility, and is the fundamental link that assures success. Ensuring not only acceptance of a person's differences, but a true understanding of those differences will stimulate a desire to learn how to work as an integral part of the process. Seek information from the student with the disability regarding their communication needs. Provide resources to facilitate effortless communication, including sign language interpreters, TTYs, additional time to compensate for written communication, etc.

### **Closing**

The development team at El Camino College is very pleased with and proud of this video. They believe it will impact postsecondary career counselors and encourage them to work with their institution's disability service providers – a "win-win" outcome for all!! *Note:* The video is available at the PEPNet Resource Center at <[www.pepnet.org](http://www.pepnet.org)>.

Those interested may contact the El Camino presenters at: 16007 Crenshaw Blvd, Torrance, CA 90506. Their phone numbers are (310) 660-3296 voice or (310) 660-3445 tty.

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