



WEB-BASED HANDBOOK

Heidi Adams

HEIDI ADAMS: I am Heidi Adams, the Community Outreach Specialist from the Center for Sight and Hearing in Rockford. MCPO is part of the national consortium called PEPnet. Its goal is to assist schools, businesses, community-based facilities, and other entities with training, technical assistance, various products and publications to make their programs accessible for people who have hearing loss.

Since we're only three here, we might as well have a very intimate presentation this morning. Would each of you say a little bit about your agency where you work.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I work for Human Resources Development Institute, which is on the south side of Chicago. We started in 1976 to serve predominantly African American communities with mental health and substance abuse problems. I am a licensed clinical psychologist. I have worked at HRDI for 20 years. We have expanded to an annual budget of \$31 million. We not only have programs on the south side of Chicago, but also on the north side in the suburbs, and in other states in the country. We have programs in Washington, DC. We have programs in Mississippi, Nevada, in Philadelphia, and we have also had programs in other countries in the world. We are looking at programs on AIDS, for example, in Africa as well as in the United States. We have several AIDS programs there. I deal very seldom with hearing impaired people but we have a few. We have one woman with neurofibrosis type I and type II. She has both. She is a very charming person. I love working with her. Then we have one young man who is hard of hearing and communicates with sign language.

HEIDI ADAMS: (To other audience member) Could you just tell us what your job is.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm from Connecticut, but I live in Maryland now and I work as the director for students with disabilities at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. I'm

also Adjunct Professor of History at Gallaudet. I've worked in disabilities or in the disability field since the '80s, so about 26 years now.

HEIDI ADAMS: (To another audience member) Would you come up and tell us what you do also.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hello, I am from Memphis, Tennessee. First and foremost, I am a full-time mother. My son was recently diagnosed with a 30 decibel hearing loss. He has entered 9th grade in high school, so we will be meeting soon with the school administrators to set up a transition plan for him entering postsecondary school. This web-based handbook session is of particular interest to me, because I am also in the process of starting a business with the Sign-to-me company that teaches hearing parents how to communicate with their hearing infants, via American Sign Language. I expect that as my business continues to grow, I will to know more about accessibility issues and that sort of thing.

HEIDI ADAMS: I think you represent two of the primary groups that will find this very useful, and I'm also counting on you to kind of pass the word along about this. (Showing a booklet) This is a web-based handbook that was developed by Dr. Gregory Long, from Northern Illinois University in the Communication Disorders program. He developed this handbook while on sabbatical in 2004.

We're going to stroll through this web resource live and learn something and have some fun. I hope that we can talk about some ways to use this tool in new and creative ways. This handbook was targeted to disability services coordinators, primarily those who may have never seen a person with a hearing loss, except maybe grandpa, in their lives. We have to realize MCPO covers 13 states with large rural areas. Therefore, we don't have large groups of people coming to central locations as in more developed areas. I can imagine you sitting behind your desk and finding out that you're going to be working with a severely hard of hearing or deaf student, and thinking, "what do I do now?" So that's what why this handbook was developed. You can go to the MCPO website. You just go to that home page and scroll down.

Let's talk about some of this program's strengths. It's web-based. That means that, unlike paper-based things which we're seeing fewer and fewer of, it's easy to maintain and update. It is on the MCPO website and is maintained by them. It has extensive internal and external links. Within the site itself, you can go from page to page or section to section, and it's also linked outside. It has a wide variety of good quality links. It also provides an opportunity for the user to provide us with feedback about what worked and what didn't work.

For me, the wonderful thing about this is if I have never seen a student with a hearing loss before, I can come up with some workable profile and a set of accommodations to help that student be successful in postsecondary education. It is also very comprehensive, as you will see. Although it was developed for disability services coordinators, it has multiple applications. The very first time I even worked with this was

at a poster session at the conference for the state coordinators of the deaf. The first people who came up to my poster session were two secondary Special Ed teachers. They were using this website with their students to prepare them for the transition from secondary school to post secondary school. Through this website, students may find that there were really better accommodations available for them than the ones that they have been accustomed to having. When students become aware of this through this website, they know what to ask for. It's also helpful for VR counselors who have people with late onset deafness who are really confused. A late-deafened person may have no idea what's out there, or what to ask for. The website can help them learn what those resources are and also help them to advocate for themselves. This can also be used by families to help students get the appropriate accommodations in a postsecondary setting.

Now we're going to take a virtual tour. This is the home page for MCPO. I'll go over here and scroll down. It asks what would you like to do? Let's go down to the third dot point. This is about developing an individualized student profile. And of course this should be done with the student, not without the student. I'm going to scroll down through this profile. What makes this helpful for the beginner is that offers a menu to choose from. You don't have to guess. Then there's also a space, after each section where you can add your own notes. When I click on "submit," it comes up with a format that can either be saved electronically, or printed out.

Now let's go to dot point 1. Here it basically defines and gives the principle behind accommodations. Dr. Long talks about unique environments. We usually don't consider the social/recreational aspects of a college experience when we're thinking about accommodations. Schools don't want to pay for things like homecoming activities, and yet we know that most students with disabilities do not drop out because of academic failure. They drop out because they don't feel a part of the program. So Dr. Long has included settings other than the classroom, and labs, also. When you think of the classroom, you think of a lecture setting but it's much more than that. So Dr. Long offers us a set of general principles and recommendations and then talks about what accommodations should be considered for any student.

Let's look at "preferential seating." It opens another window, gives a little summary, and then you can click and go back. Now let's look at "visual alerting systems." When you open this box, you get general information, but you can also click on a link, which will take you to a list of sites where you can actually learn more about visual alerting systems. You can read about the different types and what the costs are, and see pictures of them.

Let's go back to the home page to our second dot point here. This talks about the actual specific accommodations and how you determine what an individual student needs. Let's go to step 2, which is identifying environments. Which accommodations will be needed? Let's go down to science labs.

Another thing that Dr. Long he has taken into consideration is the literacy level. He looks at three groups of people and what their preferred accommodation is, and also whether they are high literacy or low literacy. Let's take late deafened, oral, low literacy profile. This matches up with the communication profile. Let's say that the educational setting is a group discussion. The menu leads you to the things that you need to take into consideration when setting up the accommodations.

I have encountered a lot of professionals who are very well acquainted with the needs of a specific group. For example, they might always have worked with people who are culturally deaf, and have a misconception that people who are hard of hearing or have a mild hearing loss have few problems. We really know that's not true. We know that children with mild hearing losses have a high number of behavioral and academic problems in school. If you are not familiar with another type of hearing loss, this profile or this set of recommendations will help enlighten you. A lot of people don't even think about lighting with hearing loss, and yet if you're sitting facing someone whose back is to a light source, it's very difficult to lip read. We think about the sound part of it, or the communication, specifically. We don't think about things like light.

So, we've just walked through the primary part of this website, how to respond to the situation of, "Oh my gosh, I have this student with a hearing loss. What do I do now?" You can go through these four areas step by step, and learn what an accommodation is when you're speaking about students with hearing loss. You can learn what different settings you need to consider. You can create a profile, and then you can match that profile with the individual accommodations. We're ready for the first day of classes.

Let's need more detailed information. Click on hearing loss info. This is an excellent resource. Anyone who comes to work at our agency has to go through this orientation at the PEPnet website. It's not really new, but it's still very basic. It's interactive. It's a kind of a fun way to learn about basic aspects of hearing loss. It also has individuals who talk about their individual types of hearing loss. They have a wonderful graphic of an audio gram that actually uses things like a piano, an airplane, to show what different sound levels really mean in the real world.

This is the section on hearing aids, the NIDCD site. You can see what kinds of information are available here. Actually, let's go ahead and go to legal mandates. This is excellent for somebody just starting out as a college disability service coordinator, and also for parents who have gone to the college campus and requested something like CART. This is an excellent resource to find out quickly from the professional's point of view what a reasonable accommodation is.

There is a tip sheet created by NITAC, talking about discrimination. By the way, there's a whole series of these tip sheets on the NITAC web site that are available through the PEPnet website. They have excellent, brief pieces of information to learn about things such as how does an instructor teach a student that has a cochlear implant. It's a PDF file so you can print it out.

Internet resources related to hearing loss have been pulled together by western Oregon University, Gallaudet's site on technology access. The do-it center from the University of Washington, able-data, anybody familiar with that that?

Now let's click on the bottom of the home page on feedback. This is a way that you can let either Greg Long or me or MCPO know what you need in this web site. What did not work for you and what you would like to see.

Before I made this presentation, I asked Dr. Long what he thought was important for ALDA people to gain from this website. He said, "Late-deafened people are particularly at risk. Most service providers, community agencies, etc, have limited experience dealing with the variety of communication options used by this population. It is critical that these individuals consider both technology and context in determining their communication needs. This web site could certainly be used to help people who are late-deafened request communication accommodations that best meet their unique needs"

By the way, this site is maintained. It's a difficult website to follow up on all the links because it's linked so extensively both inside and outside. Sometimes you get disoriented, but I'm the one who follows up on these links, so you can e-mail me, and then MCPO. The IT staff follows up. There are some links that are not on here right now that we will be putting back. We removed them because the southern region of PEPnet called PECK is restructuring their web site, and we do straighten things out. There's an area on mental health that is on the NAD web site and it was absolutely crazy because it didn't matter what you clicked on, you went to a different place each time. So the IT person at MCPO contacted NAD. It should be working now. We do maintain this website. It's not ignored!

Now I would like to get some feedback from you. How helpful is this going to be to each of you?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: It was so easy to navigate -- I was surprised -- in fact, I'm planning to bring that back to the office to see if we can take some parts and some of the information. I think it will be very helpful. For example, the list of accommodations for students who are visually impaired, that is very nice. I think we can adjust that to the students that we are working with. One thing that is unique about Gallaudet University is our students all are deaf. So interpreters aren't really an issue because we have full communication access. At the same time, we're seeing an increased number of students who are late-deafened who do not sign, and who maybe have gone to another college or university and received services like CART. services which CART is expensive, so it is a challenge for us, to figure out how we meet those needs, or make those accommodations. But yes, I think it's a wonderful web site and resource.

HEIDI ADAMS: Gallaudet is listed as one of the resources over and over because they have some excellent information on their website for people who use assistive listening devices.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: An interesting statistic is on average, nine percent of any college or university student population are disabled. It's an invisible disability. They could be learning disabilities, and the whole gamut of disabilities that are invisible so you need to be more prepared. We need to figure out how to use our resources to meet those needs as well.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was very pleased to see this kind of resource available to people. Now I have two thoughts. Working with the Hearing Loss Association Chapter in Chicago, I find that very few members have access to the Internet because they don't have money to buy their own computers, and it may be difficult for them to go to the local library and use their computers. They are not computer literate, so some lower income families may not have access to this particular resource. It would be good to see more high schools actively research this type of site. My second thought is that this website could also be helpful in linking people to resources that help them find out how to prepare the high school student for work, in a postsecondary environment. Some of them, for example, don't realize that the level of homework goes up so tremendously when they go to college. So they need to understand the importance of reading, reading, and reading. When I started college, some of my peers were floored because they had assignments to read 50 pages for the next class, so you have to budget your time with classes, homework, and some people have to work at the college setting in order to help pay their education expenses. So I think preparation links would be really helpful.

HEIDI ADAMS What ideas do you have of places where you think it could be used?

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANT: I'm not really sure. I have a cochlear implant, and I do not work. I'm not exactly retired, but I'm on long-term disability. I'm not a computer wiz either, but I will go to the library and look up these things and see how it will help me.

HEIDI ADAMS: You're right, it's not limited just to college students. Dr Long is interested in doing the same type of thing, targeting the website toward community-based rehabilitation facilities. Not all students are going to go on to an academic environment, or even if they do, they may need support with other kinds of things. I think this is excellent also for late-deafened people who don't have a clue what they need or want. I could see it being used by counselors and in church groups also.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was thinking another source is for students who are in college and find they're not ready, they're not mature enough, they're developmentally not prepared for college. They need something in between leaving the postsecondary situation and going on to the college situation. That gap in the middle is a problem.

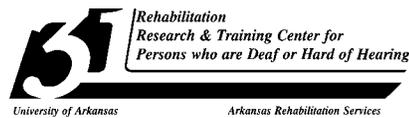
HEIDI ADAMS: That's exactly one area in which community-based facilities excel. We could collaborate. Before a student reaches the tipping point where they've failed, if somebody catches it early enough, we could provide the support services they need.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm very pleased to see so much information in one spot and I look forward to visiting the web site and seeing what all I can find. I have two words to say to this lady's comments and that is amen! I thoroughly agree that the high schools need to get on board with this and prepare our students for college. It would be wonderful if there was some collaboration with the state departments of education or with the national PTA. The PTA has been known to move mountains, so I know that something can be done at some level to help these children out there. I can use the information on this website, at some level, or another, not only for my own son, but for those older students who do happen to come my way.

HEIDI ADAMS: I have presented this at a training for the rehab counselors for the deaf in the Illinois. The manager of the Division of Services for People who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing was very enthusiastic about how counselors could use this with their customers to walk them through the whole accommodation thing, whether they were going to send them on to school or for training or whether they were going to just seek jobs. I think for families, this is a wonderful advocacy tool. Thank you so much for coming. I appreciate it.

Biographical

Heidi Adams is the Community Outreach Specialist for the Center for Sight & Hearing in Rockford, Illinois. She was a Rehabilitation Counselor, Planning Specialist, and Co-owner of the Communication System for Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services. Before becoming deaf, she was employed as a Speech/Language Pathologist in a variety of settings. She holds Bachelors and Masters degrees in Communicative Disorders from Northwestern University. Heidi has been an ALDAn since 1988 and served at both the local and national levels, most recently as President of ALDA-Chicago.



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