

## Preface

We live in challenging times. Our world is changing faster than ever before. New discoveries seem to be made every week, while new ways of doing things and new products are developed almost daily. The world of work has been dramatically affected by changes in the global economy, labor market, communication technology, and the way that business is conducted. Consequently, to be attractive to employers, individuals must be highly literate, communicate well with others, be flexible, be capable of troubleshooting and problem-finding, and be able to shift roles should their current position become outmoded (Gardner, 1999).

In contrast, as recently as 1950, most people held blue-collar jobs in factories or businesses that involved fairly simple tasks, planned and organized by others. Urbanization and industrialization required a workforce that was reliable and functionally literate. If students did not succeed in school, it was not a major problem. During that era, most individuals did not even need to graduate from high school to make a good living. But by the early 1990s, most assembly-line manufacturing jobs had disappeared from the United States. Currently, blue-collar workers comprise about 13% of the workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000).

The labor market of today and the projected future has been shaped by the technological changes that have occurred over the past 50 years. As a result of these changes, the labor market presents a significant challenge for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Computers are displacing workers in many industries, and the service industry has become one of the fastest growing industries, offering many different types of career opportunities. Consequently, the economy is demanding a new and different workforce for the future. Businesses are demanding well-trained, high-quality, educated, and skilled workers for the types of jobs currently being created in the United States (Wehman, 1998).

One of the primary goals of formal education is to prepare individuals to be effective citizens, parents, and workers (Goodlad, 1990). One aspect of that goal is for students to leave school with the knowledge and skills necessary to go to work. People work for a variety of reasons and get various rewards for their efforts. Productive work is one of the cornerstones of adulthood. It affects the core dimensions that are frequently associated with quality of life, providing people with money, personal identity, and relationships.

Many successful individuals are deaf or hard of hearing. However, for a variety of reasons, many individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing have failed to develop the ability to live independently or to acquire the educational and vocational aspirations that positively affect postsecondary attendance or employment outcomes. Thousands of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing have not been educated to meet the demands of contemporary society and, as a result, they have been unable to make a successful transition into adult life. Consequently, we need to work together to make sure that students who are deaf or hard of hearing leave school able to assume adult roles in society, including the abilities

to take care of their physical and emotional health, to nurture and maintain relationships, and to earn a living.

As people move from childhood through adolescence to adult life, they experience many transitions—each with varying degrees of success and setbacks. Transition involves change—movement from one situation to another. Each transition entails dealing with unfamiliar people, places, routines, and events. The more proactive people are about the transitions in their lives, the better able they are to overcome the discomfort that generally accompanies each transition while simultaneously increasing the development of positive relations and familiarity with new settings and routines.

Because we live in an era of constant change, the technological and societal demands on young people who are deaf or hard of hearing are greater than ever. These students need systematic instruction and careful planning in making transition as smooth as possible. Consequently, transition planning is now a critical component of every student's education. The purpose of this book is to help professionals, students, and families become familiar with how to develop and implement individual transition plans for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The knowledge gained from reading and using the materials provided in this book will increase the reader's ability to meet the transition mandates of the Individuals with Disabilities Act Amendments of 1997. In addition, the reader will have a better understanding of how to work in partnership with students, families, and professionals to develop appropriate transition plans and effective plans of study, which will in the long run help individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing reach their maximum potential and lead fulfilling adult lives.

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*“Deaf people can do anything that hearing people can do, except hear.”*

—I. King Jordan, Jr.