

FEATURE ARTICLE

THE DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITY PROGRAM

The Developmental Activity Program (D.A.P.) began at Swan Industries in September, 1985. We are presently funded for 10 spaces with enrollment expected to increase in January/88. This program was set up to provide a Vocational day program option for adults with severe and/or multiple handicaps.

The program was initiated in response to a need in our community. A number of individuals were attending school programs well beyond the age of 18 years. In the interest of more normalized life experiences for individuals the School Boards were planning to withdraw programming for adults. Except in very special circumstances where programs may be extended to the age of 22 years, the School Boards are now following their policy that school programs end for students at age 18.

It seemed natural, in the view of our Association's commitment to people with mental handicaps and the fact that our Residential services were already providing group home living and programs to a number of these individuals, that Vocational services expand existing programs.

With the establishment of Crystal Park School in our community and the continued commitment of Alberta Social Services to move individuals to appropriate programs in their home communities from Michener Centre we see a good possibility that enrollment could double within the next 2 years.

D.A.P. began to operate, temporarily, in the same work space at Swan Industries with the Diversional/Daisy Fresh Diaper Service. Presently the Diversional area is planning to move to store front premises in the community where they will operate a baby related business with the Diaper Service and other related services. With this move D.A.P. will be able to renovate the existing area at Swan to better meet D.A.P.'s expanding needs. Renovations are scheduled to be completed by January 1, 1988.

D.A.P. presently operates 10 spaces with a staffing complement of 4. With this increased staffing ratio we are able to meet additional needs which may be required including assistance with self-care, increased supervision and increased ability to respond to individual teaching needs. The program concentrates on those work skills required at an entry level to introduce a work atmosphere and ultimately to increase independent functioning in a work environment. Work skills such as:

- being able to adapt to a workday of 7 hours (8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.)
- being able to follow a normal work routine.
- being able to follow instructions.
- recognizing and following safety procedures.
- being able to access facilities and appropriately use them, such as washrooms, lunchrooms, work areas and equipment.

We also see as a priority the increasing of an individuals ability to interact with his/her environment. Part of any environment is people, therefore communication skills become an important focus.

Being a part of the continuum of vocational services, the same opportunities exist for D.A.P. participants as for other vocational program participants. The D.A.P. graduate could continue with a higher level program at Swan Industries such as an Activity level program. They may also be able to access options in the community as they become available to our services as a whole such as work experience, supported employment etc.

Existing as part of the whole, D.A.P. will be everchanging, responding to the needs of specific individuals as well as to current trends and thoughts within the field of Rehabilitation and Human Services.

More than anything else I have personally learned over the last 2 years working with D.A.P. that people are not so much different as they are the same. We all have the same needs and hopes for a fulfilling present and future. Despite the D.A.P. being new to our association it is merely a continuation of services we already offer. D.A.P. is not really any different than other vocational services we offer.

Those of you who would like to learn more about the vocational services our Association offers, there is a standing invitation to contact myself or Sandra Moe, (Program Coordinator). We are appreciative of your interest and your input.

Joanne Wiens