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Junge: Relationship of the USDE Health Occupations Program Specialist

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RELATIONSHIP OF THE **USDE** HEALTH OCCUPATIONS PROGRAM SPECIALIST TO HEALTH OCCUPATIONS PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT THE NATION

Catherine **Bickle Junge**¹

Abstract: Serving as an information conduit between health care professional **groups** and associations and state health occupations educators is the primary focus of the Health Occupations Education Specialist in the U.S. Department of Education. The job description lists, among others, three assignments: provide national leadership in vocational health occupations education; identify and work with health care industry groups, employers, and labor representatives; and, provide leadership to **Health** Occupations Students of America. Activities related to providing leadership to state health occupations education representatives are carried out in four areas: personal contact with health occupations educators, a program memorandum, a series of telephone conference calls, and two national conferences. Among the health care industry groups identified are those found within federal government departments and agencies, members of health care professional

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associations, and representatives of industries supplying health care technological devices and materials. Providing leadership to **Health** Occupations Students of America is carried out **by** serving on the Board of Directors, maintaining contact with the National Office, and participating in activities of the National Coordinating Council of Vocational Student Organizations. The Program Specialist disseminates information gathered at the national level to state health occupations educators and collects information from state personnel to be shared with contact persons operating in the national arena.

President Ronald Reagan generally has been described as the "Great Communicator" . This description might be used as well to characterize the role of occupational program specialists in **the** U.S. Department of Education as they have served during the first six years of President Reagan's **term of** office. Occupational program specialists are designated for Agriculture, Business, Health Occupations, Home Economics, Industrial Arts, Marketing, and Trade and Industrial Education. The U.S. Department of Education's (1986) position description for occupational program specialists includes the following guidelines:

These persons should provide national leadership and advisory services to the States in specialized vocational education areas. . identify and work with business and industry groups, employers and labor with the view to their greater involvement in the education process. . provide leadership and direction to the appropriate **vocational** student organization (p.1).

This article will outline briefly a few of the activities developed under these guidelines, as they apply to the health occupations education specialist. These activities are grouped in three categories: those

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related to contacts with health occupations education (HOE) state supervisors, teacher educators, administrators, and instructors; those related to contacting representatives of the health care system; and those activities related to Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) members, advisors, and the national organization staff.

Providing Leadership and Advisory Services to the States

Activities related to providing national leadership and advisory services to the states have been carried out chiefly in four areas: personal contact with health occupations educators, an HOE program memorandum, a series of telephone calls and two national HOE conferences. Since travel funds are limited, the number of personal contacts has been relatively small. Many personal contacts have been made through the health occupations groups affiliated with the American Vocational Association (AVA): the HOE Division, the Association of Health Occupations Teacher Educators (AHOTE), the National Association of Health Occupations Teachers (NAHOT), and the National Association of State Administrators of Health Occupations Education (NASAHOE). Primarily, leadership has been provided through other activities.

The program memorandum, HOE Lines, is mailed to HOE state supervisors and teacher educators. They are encouraged to duplicate the information and share it with local health occupations instructors. A sampling of memorandum content reveals: news of changes in state supervisors and teacher educators; news from health professional associations; editorials, e.g. "Practical Nursing;" information on new treatments of importance to health care educators, e.g. "Oral Dehydration Therapy."

Telephone conferences structured according to assistance provided by Robert Miller (Trade and Industrial Specialist active for four years with

telephone methodology) have served as a method of information exchange on a national basis with state supervisors. The calls are structured so that the supervisors do most of the talking. Remarks by the HOE Specialist are limited to a few opening statements and a question or two; the remainder of the time is spent listening to reports from state supervisors. Conferees receive a prior agenda and the discussion is limited to one hour. During the hour, participants have an opportunity to suggest agenda topics for future conferences. A summary of each previous regional **call** is sent to **all** participants before the next series of **calls** begin. A general summary of each series of calls is included in a subsequent program memorandum.

Two national conferences were planned for 1986: a research conference and a curriculum conference. The National HOE Research Conference, co-sponsored by Auburn University, the University of Georgia, and Florida International University, was held April 11-13, 1986 at Auburn University, Alabama. Dr. Norma Walters was local conference coordinator. The National Curriculum Conference, co-sponsored by The University of Iowa, is scheduled for October 7-10, 1986 in Des Moines, Iowa. Ms. Joyce **Brandt is** local coordinator for this conference. Both conferences were endorsed by HOE organizations affiliated with AVA: the HOE Division, AHOTE, NAHOT, and **NASAHOE**.

Topics for the curriculum conference include: (a) changes in health care delivery due to advancing technology, (b) developing changes in the philosophy of health care and the modes of delivery for health care, and (c) impact on health occupations education program curricula with changes in health care. These topics are planned to alert health occupations educators to current issues in **health** care and health occupations education. Participants will have an opportunity to discuss the curricular impact of identified issues,

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Contacts with Health Care Representatives

It is the responsibility of the HOE Program Specialist to **communicate** with health care representatives either personally or through an exchange of newsletters and memoranda. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the health industry employs over seven million persons. These persons are represented by health care groups and organizations in the Washington, D.C. area such as those found within federal government departments and agencies, members of health care professional associations, and representatives of industries supplying health care technological devices and materials.

Among the federal departments concerned with education of technical health care providers are several divisions of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (**DHHS**): the Divisions of Nursing and Associated and Dental Health; the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; the Health Care Finance Administration; and the National Institutes of Health. Other federal departments and agencies concerned with education of technical health care providers are the Departments of Labor, Defense, and Transportation; the Veteran's Administration; and the National Council on the Aging. Other groups concerned with health care provider education include (a) associations of health professionals, such as the American Medical Association; and (b) associations of health industry suppliers and manufacturers, such as **the** Health Industry Manufacturers Association.

Since many of these groups sponsor seminars and conferences in the Washington, D.C. area, **it** is possible to become involved with several health professional associations and information exchange has been arranged among health professions groups. Also, information briefings given by members of Congress may be attended. By and large, health professionals appear to be

unaware of, or to **ignore**, contributions of health care providers at technical and vocational levels. Members of Congress, also, tend to deal only with educational programs for the upper level of health professionals. The prevailing theory appears to be that funds and services will "trickle down" **to** educational programs for technical health care providers. **It** is the responsibility of HOE educators at technical and vocational levels to disseminate information concerning local programs.

As advancing technology becomes increasingly incorporated **into the** health care system, more and more manufacturers have become involved in health care. Many business and industry groups share instructional materials about their products with health occupations educators. A future goal for the HOE Specialist is to compile a list of these business and industry groups and the information they have available.

Providing Leadership to Health Occupations Students of America

Providing leadership and direction to HOSA is carried out principally through three activities: serving on the HOSA, Inc. Board of Directors, maintaining contact with **the** HOSA National Office, and participating in activities of the National Coordinating Council of Vocational Student Organizations (**NCCVSO**). The HOSA, Inc. Board of Directors meets twice a year, prior to and during the HOSA National Conference and prior to the AVA Convention. Between these two meetings, committee assignments are carried out by mail and by telephone.

The HOE Program Specialist and the HOSA **National** Office share information on a number **of** topics. Samples of information shared include HOE program enrollments, lists of contact persons in the health care industry, and names of health care professional associations.

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The NCCVSO meets five to six times each year. Meetings are held in the Washington, D.C. headquarters building of the member organizations: Future Business Leaders of America, Distributive Education Clubs of America, American Industrial Arts Student Association, Future Farmers of America, Future Homemakers of America, and Vocational Industrial Clubs of America. Meetings hosted by Office Education Association or HOSA are held in the facilities of one of the groups listed above. NCCVSO members include executive directors of the various student organizations, the U.S. Department of Education occupational program specialists, and representatives of other vocational professional organizations, e.g. AVA, National Council for Vocational Education, and National Association of State Directors of Vocational Education. Agendas include issues of mutual concern, cooperative efforts between the student organizations, and vocational education in general.

Summary

This article has described briefly the activities of the Health Occupations Education Program Specialist in the U.S. Department of Education. Activities are associated with providing leadership and advisory services to states in health occupations education, identifying and working with health care business and industry groups and health professional associations, and providing leadership and direction to HOSA. The HOE Program Specialist serves as a facilitator for exchange of information collected at the national level and disseminated to the states. News of state and local HOE activities is shared with individuals and groups operating in the national arena.

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