

Willis, Richard G., & Vernon, McCay
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Residential psychiatric treatment of emotionally disturbed deaf youth
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“...there is general agreement of these investigations that serious emotional disturbance is present in 8% to 22% of deaf children, as compared to 2% to 10% of children in the general population (Vernon & Andrews, 1990).”

“Several reasons are given for the greater prevalence of serious mental illness among deaf children. One is that many causes of deafness also cause brain damage...Another major source of the variance is communication problems inherent in deafness, which are often compounded by inappropriate educational methods (Denmark, 1973; Land, 1992; Meadow, 1980; Vernon & Daigle-King, 1999). A third factor is the much greater prevalence of sexual abuse of deaf youth, relative to other children (Sullivan, Vernon, & Scanlon, 1987).”

“Data for the present study were gathered during 1998 and 1999. The research compares the psychological status of 58 deaf youth committed to a residential care facility to that of 168 hearing youth in the same residential program.”

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“Some of the primary clinical features that distinguish deaf youth admitted to residential treatment facilities from some of their hearing peers include patterns of physical assault and aggression as part of their presenting problems, and sexual abuse prior to their residential treatment.”

“For hearing youth, psychoactive chemical abuse is frequently a major consideration determining the need for residential treatment as an intervention.”

“Physical aggression and assault was a significant factoring in the referral concerns for all the deaf children and a great majority of the deaf adolescents in the present study.”

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“What we found were abnormally high rates of sexual abuse for both deaf and hearing young people admitted to residential treatment. One hundred percent of the deaf children had experienced sexual abuse based on their admitting information. Deaf adolescents had an 85% rate of sexual abuse as part of their clinical profile. These findings are comparable to those reported by Boys Town Research Hospital Sexual Abuse Center (Sullivan et al, 1987). The hearing children and adolescents were both 20 percentage points below their deaf peers in their rate of reported sexual abuse, rates that are still frighteningly high.”