

# INTRODUCTION

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A major concern in the field of assistive technology is ensuring that service providers are qualified to evaluate, recommend, train, and provide follow-up. RESNA is developing a position paper on quality assurance. To add to the dialogue on this topic, the University at Buffalo held a conference on June 14, 1991, entitled "Graduate and Professional Education In Assistive Technology: Issues in Credentialing." The conference included assistive technology educators, policy level state and federal agency personnel, corporate representatives, service providers, and representatives of national professional associations. This issue of *Technology and Disability* is devoted to the topic of credentialing in general and to the results of this conference in particular.

The issue includes three major sections: (1) articles by educators in model programs addressing assistive technology professional education; (2) a panel discussion from the June 1991 conference; and (3) short statements by educators, state agency representatives, service providers, and a company representative.

The articles in the first section describe model programs of professional education in assistive technology. Sharon Cramer discusses the need for assistive technology education for teachers, and the key issues in introducing assistive technology in a school-based setting. Frank Dolan discusses the new field of rehabilitation engineering and differentiates engineers, engineering technologists, and engineering technicians. Professional education for speech-language pathologists is

covered by Jeffery Higginbotham and Susan Lawrence-Dederich. Occupational therapy professional education is addressed by Roger Smith. A multidisciplinary team model for professional education, called "Applied Studies," is described by William Mann. The role of vocational counselors within the Applied Studies multidisciplinary team model is discussed by Dwight Kauppi.

The second section provides comments from a panel discussion on issues in credentialing. Each of the 60 representatives at the June 1991 meeting was invited to participate. The discussion includes further definition of the problems with credentialing and quality assurance and some recommendations for solving these problems.

The final section presents short statements from educators, state agency personnel, including several who represent third party payors, and corporate and service provider representatives. These statements highlight the problems faced with quality assurance and reflect current practices in addressing the problems.

*Technology and Disability* presents these articles, comments, and statements to promote further consideration of the major topic of credentialing and quality assurance. We hope that the continued dialogue will result in the best of the model programs described here being further refined and eventually incorporated into traditional educational curricula.

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