

# LEISURE COUNSELING

An Aspect of  
Leisure Education

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The responsibility for filling large blocks of free time — a problem introduced by increased automation, shorter working hours and the waning work ethic — has become a cumbersome burden for many people. This book is designed to aid counselors, therapists, and park and recreation personnel working in both institutional and community settings who want to help their clients use their free time more effectively. Personality and needs assessment, values clarification, and special problems of alcoholics, parolees, the mentally retarded, psychiatric patients and retirees are examined. Over 300 bibliographical references to the professional literature by prominent authorities in the field complement the detailed descriptions of the philosophy and approaches of a leisure program to produce a well-rounded examination of this subject.



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## PREFACE

OVER the past few years the basic conceptualization of the purpose and value of recreation services in both institutional and community settings has been undergoing considerable scrutiny and change. For example, there has been a developing concern in institutional settings over the failure of rehabilitation efforts to include the total factors of daily living patterns, i.e. work, subsistence, and free time. With the increased attention being paid to community living as opposed to institutional stagnation, *and* the growing realization that work- and subsistence-oriented rehabilitation efforts are by themselves insufficient to fully enable community living, institution recreation personnel, and those in related professional groups have begun to explore the whole spectrum of leisure behavior as it affects adjustment and overall rehabilitation.

In community settings, concern is increasingly being expressed over the degree to which the park and recreation movement has become simply a resource supplier (facilities and programs) with too little emphasis on how people utilize available opportunities as opposed to truly helping to supply the interface between individual needs and resources. Reliance on mass activities usually in the sports area, reliance on attendance as a key variable of success, and general concern for the needs of a fairly limited segment of the population have led many individuals both within and outside the recreation profession to question the purpose and goals of park and recreation services.

As a result of the concern for individual needs and the recognition of the role of recreation in the total adjustment process, there has been a new emphasis on services in both institutional and community settings which promote increased ability to utilize available resources as well as broaden recreational inter-

ests and priorities. Thus, the timing of this book coincides with:

1. the increasing growth of the acceptance of leisure experiences as a viable means of achieving self-expression and actualization;
2. the increasing concern with the recreational experience from the point of view of the participant;
3. the increasing recognition that individuals need help in developing leisure competencies just as they often require aid in acquiring work-related skills; and
4. the increasing interest in the recreation field and related professions with improving aspects of professional practice in the area of leisure counseling.

The burgeoning interest with leisure education has been one outgrowth of the above concerns. Practitioners and educators alike have recognized the need for a different orientation to professional practice with emphasis being placed on "enabling" services and efforts to help individuals develop leisure attitudes and resource utilization skills.

Leisure counseling, as one specific aspect of the overall leisure education process, is the subject matter with which the present volume currently deals. Over the past fifteen years, leisure counseling has become the adopted word of services emanating from the institutional or therapeutic milieu and aimed at: (1) helping clients make fuller use of free time opportunities during the rehabilitation process; (2) facilitating the community reintegration process; and (3) possibly helping clients overcome one of the primary causes of institutionalization — misuse or inadequate use of available free time.

While one should not become overly preoccupied with words or labels, continued reliance on a word implying method to denote what is primarily an objective will cause considerable confusion as services expand, as attempts are made to conceptualize the place of these services in an overall model of human services, and as the community and the schools become the primary focus of efforts in this area. For the above reasons, this book deals with the *method* of leisure counseling as one means



of achieving the *goal* of leisure education.

In the various chapters, the reader will find attention is primarily focused on institutional settings or experiences with special populations, not because this is necessarily the area of greatest applicability, but rather because most of the available literature has been forthcoming from individuals working in this context. Thus, the several described examples of community-based counseling efforts should not be seen as proportionally indicative of future service emphasis. Greater attention to community settings and a wider range of client groups appear to be the trend. Hopefully, the material collected here will help provide the basis of understanding for future developments in these latter areas. With the above points in mind the objectives of this volume are as follows:

1. to organize resources from journals, speeches, and conference proceedings regarding the philosophy, rationale, and practice of leisure counseling;
2. to identify needs and examine priorities and directions in the area of leisure counseling;
3. to draw implications for education and research related to this area of service.

Hopefully, this book meets a broad spectrum of needs for recreation personnel in agency, community, or institutional settings as well as for students. However, the volume is also intended to serve the needs of other social service personnel such as social workers, psychologists, and rehabilitation workers interested in the leisure counseling process.

As in other areas of recreation services, we are in a time of revitalization of our concepts, principles, and working structures. We hope that this book will temper the revitalization process by affording a realistic assessment of present concepts and programs in order to avoid band wagon, shotgun, and other inappropriate responses. A participant in a recent seminar on avocational counseling remarked that the highly sophisticated computer techniques presented for determining interests and identifying potential compatible resources appeared as "a method in search of a mystique." Only by sorting out the reasons can our methods avoid the trap of regimenta-



tion, institutionalization, and oversimplification. Thus, at the relative "birth" of concern and practice, we offer this material in the hope that an understanding of needs as well as past and present solutions will help clarify and direct future priorities and directions.

Peter A. Witt  
Arlin Epperson  
Gerald Hitzhusen

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**LEISURE  
COUNSELING**



## **Section I**

# **PHILOSOPHY AND BACKGROUND**





## INTRODUCTION

PETER A. WITT

IN terms of time and volume of literature, leisure counseling does not have a long or abundant history. Many factors have combined to either slow the implementation of leisure counseling services or relegate existing services to only a small portion of the total leisure services model. These factors have included the predominance of the work ethic, the preponderance of care versus rehabilitation approaches to institutionalization, the failure to fully conceptualize the problems that a rehabilitated person faces when return to the community becomes possible, and the failure to believe or accept the fact that the normal mainstream individual has problems with meaningful utilization of available free time.

In recent years, many forces have combined to make the notion of increased ability to utilize free time both an acceptable and necessary programmatic objective of some institutional rehabilitative efforts. At the community level, the impetus of institutional concern and the changing role of municipal recreation from that of an *activity provider* to that of an *activity enabler* has opened the door to the possibility of community based leisure counseling services.

The two articles in this introductory section on philosophy and background of leisure counseling services are written by two of the pioneers in the conceptualization and provision of leisure counseling services. Although primarily dealing with institutional services, they also provide an understanding of the basis for needed community services. O'Morrow supplies a detailed description and analysis of the social and professional forces which have combined to make leisure counseling services a reality in some settings and impossible in others. He describes