

Meet Russ Goddard

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Summer Academy Program Co-Director & Statewide Coordinator of Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind Services

Tell us about your career journey.

I graduated from high school in New Jersey and started my college studies at Trenton State College in deaf education. After two years there, I transferred to Eastern Kentucky University. However, during my senior year there, I realized that I didn't want to teach kids and instead wanted to work with Deaf and hard of hearing adults. So, I went to my Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf (RCD) in Kentucky OVR, and he suggested looking into getting a master's in rehabilitation counseling at the University of Kentucky, which I did. In 1999, I started my career as an intern in Cincinnati, Ohio. Once I graduated with a master's degree, I applied for, and got, a permanent position as an RCD for the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission. I transferred to the Zanesville, OH office in 2004, and then moved to Western PA in 2007 and started to work for OVR at the New Castle office as an RCD. In 2013, I was promoted to my current position, and I recently celebrated 25 years in VR.

What do you like best about your job?

I like working with high school students who are deaf or hard of hearing through my work assignment as a program director for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Summer Academy! It's a chance to directly impact their lives and hope they make good choices with their lives, something that I wish I could do when I was their age.

Who or what has helped you succeed in your career journey?

I would say that it was grit that helped me succeed in my career journey more than anything else. It takes persistence, patience and courage to find the right person and look inside myself to really know what I wanted to do when I grew up.

What advice do you have for job seekers with disabilities?

Do not be afraid to educate others about your disabilities. Chances are that the person you're working with or interviewing with may not know much about your disability and how you could do the essential tasks of your job. Show them what you can do!

This year's NDEAM theme is Access to Good Jobs for All. What is one action you think others can do to help make a difference in this space?

Employers and coworkers should have the courage and willingness to meet where the employees are. Learn some new and different ways to communicate, such as through texting, email or even picking up a few signs!

