

Finally
resulted

WSSH
closing

Letter to
Cohill

September 19, 1974

The Honorable Maurice B. Cohill, Jr.
Juvenile Court
3333 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15213

Dear Pinky,

I wanted you to know that on September 18, 1974, the Board of Directors of the Allegheny County Chapter of the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens, voted unanimously to close admissions at Western State School and Hospital. The motion was as follows:

"Because the overcrowding and understaffing at Western State School and Hospital results in daily injury or death and inadequate care of the residents, the Allegheny County Chapter, Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens demands the closing of all admissions and immediate reduction of overcrowding.

Admissions should remain closed until the "total care" lodges comply with the minimum staffing standards of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals (JCAH) and Federal Medical Assistance (MA). This means the lodges must meet Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals staff/resident ratio.

The Allegheny County Chapter, Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens insists that immediate alternatives be created by the Department of Public Welfare and Mental Health/Mental Retardation for mentally retarded citizens who are also severely physically or emotionally handicapped, or whose family needs respite care.

The Allegheny County Chapter, Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens will assist with the Development of Residential Alternatives and will obtain legal counsel to aid the Department of Public Welfare to fight MH/MR or Juvenile court ordered commitments.

Judge Cohill
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I wanted you to know, from me personally, that the residents who now reside at WSSH are already receiving inadequate care. (For instance, many units, appropriate for 28 residents, have only two child care aides working with 42 residents). Adding a single new resident to WSSH will guarantee only a less adequate program for those who already live there - and a totally inadequate home for the new comer.

We want you to know that ACC-PARC will do anything in our power to help you find appropriate places for the retarded children whom you serve. But please, Pinky, do not send any one to WSSH.

Incidentally, I would be delighted to join you in a tour of WSSH at your convenience. I am sure you will agree with us about the conditions.

Would you give me a call if you have suggestions on how to prevent MH/MR court commitments to Western State School and Hospital.

Thanks for your untiring interest in all kids.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Virginia Thornburgh
President

VJT:cp