

Polk

POLK PROGRESS REPORT - FOUR MONTHS - PREPARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

Mr. Joseph Columbatto began his duties as Acting Superintendent at Polk State School and Hospital on June 4, 1973. Since that time, Mr. Columbatto has had the opportunity to observe, review, and meet with numerous staff, at all levels, as well as to develop an administrative structure at Polk. He has been encouraged by the enthusiasm, cooperation, and willingness of the Polk staff to develop new program direction at Polk. The following are some of the new programs which have been developed and are operating at Polk.

Placement Readiness Program - 20 moderately retarded women, ages 25 to 40, are living in an apartment complex on the Polk grounds. The program is staffed by 10 volunteer Polk child care aides, and began on August 20 -- just five weeks after the initial planning began. The goal of this transitional project is to work with Polk residents who are potential candidates for group home living. The emphasis of the program is on the development of personal, social, and vocational skills needed to function in a community setting. Twenty-seven members of the committee who drafted the program represented almost every department at Polk, including Psychology, Social Service, Dietary, Nursing Services, Rehabilitation, Recreation and Religion. On September 10, another apartment complex will open for young men on the Polk grounds.

The Right to Education will become a reality at Polk this year. This year, 455 children, including the severely and profoundly retarded, and those with multiple handicaps, will receive an education or training program prescribed for each child individually, according to the developmental needs of the child. Last year, at Polk, a total of 180 children were enrolled in the school program. The program will be fully operational by September 17.

Beginning September 25th, a new Developmental Intervention Program will be started at Polk. The goal of this program is to provide some type of daily program for each resident in his or her residence based on individual needs. The primary target group are those residents who have been restrained for behavioral reasons. Each resident will be provided with a prescriptive program emphasizing each area as basic communication, body positioning, speech development, and basic motor skills. This will eventually allow residents to have more freedom of movement, leading to a reduction in hyperactive and destructive behavior.

Vocational Training Program - 250 residents of Polk State School began participating in a Vocational Training Program on September 1st. The Vocational Training Program is one part of a two-phase program designed to provide either vocational training or work activities for an estimated 771 residents of Polk who are over 21. Included in the program is a year-round program for the elderly severely and profoundly retarded. The Work Activity Program for these residents will begin on September 24th, enrolling approximately 400 residents. It is expected that by Dec. 1 all of the 771 residents will be involved in the Vocational Training Program.



Co-ed Dining has been initiated in three dining areas of Polk. Previously, men and women had separate dining times. The program, which began on September 3rd, features three meals in a co-ed sitting, daily, in the Northside Building, Southside Building and the Cafeteria.

Mr. Columbatto released an Administrative Reorganization Plan. The reorganization places all areas of the institution directly under the supervision of an Assistant Superintendent with expertise and experience in three main Divisions. Associate Superintendents have been designated for Program Services, Medical Services, and Support Services. In addition, a full-time Volunteer Services Director has been appointed and will begin to initiate an in-service training program for volunteers. An active recruitment program for volunteers from nearby communities and service groups will also be initiated.

A Bar Mitzvah -- the first in Polk's history, will be held on November 25th at Paole Zedek Temple in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The candidates have been receiving instruction from Rabbi Heber of the Polk staff, with assistance from volunteer staff. Parents, friends, and relatives will be invited to attend.

Behavior Clinic - Two Psychiatric Consultants, along with the Psychology Staff at Polk, are working with the Developmental Intervention Program. The Behavior Clinic staff will assist in evaluating residents with behavior problems and serve as consultants to Child Care Aides, Nursing Staff, and Intervention Counselors in developing programming in the buildings.

Referral and Placement Team - This committee, composed of representatives of all service components at Polk, carefully evaluates each candidate for group home placement, as well as evaluating various community facilities. Staff representatives from the Psychology, Social Service, Nursing Service, Education, and Rehabilitation departments discuss the progress of a resident, and arrange for visits by the resident to the group home. The committee also will function as a liason with parents of candidates.

The Polk Parents Group continues to meet with Mr. Columbatto and staff. This has resulted in establishing a direct line of communication with the Acting Superintendent where parents may bring problems or concerns to his immediate attention.

Policy and Review Committee - This group meets regularly to formalize rules and policy for the institution. Many customs, such as girls not being permitted to ride bicycles; boys and girls not permitted to hold hands; and girls prohibited to visit the canteen alone, have long been regarded by staff as rules. Many of these customs have served as unwritten rules for 75 years. This committee is looking into these customs, as well as rules to formalize a policy which focuses on the rights of patients, the rights of parents, and the needs of the staff.



Cottage One Program - All residents in Cottage One are participating in a program designed to prepare them for community living. Under the direction of a Housemother, the residents are learning personal grooming, washing, ironing, and mending clothing, cooking, and "housekeeping" in the cottage. Residents selected an orange and yellow color scheme and painted the downstairs area, then selected and hung orange drapes. Five residents have become entrepreneurs. One young man operates a Kool Aid stand, another a shoe shine shop. Two residents have set up a Bicycle Repair Shop. Residents either attend Vocational Training or an individual interest based activity under the direction of Therapeutic Activity Workers. Field trips to Franklin have familiarized the young men with the community and various community services, such as the Post Office, Supermarket, Police Station, Drug Store, and County Public Assistance Office. Visits to various group home facilities in Erie and visits to parents of the residents have also been a part of the program.

Clarion Pilot Program - 20 children, in the severely and profoundly retarded range, participated in a Pilot Program on the campus of Clarion State College for three weeks in August. 10 of these were Polk residents and 10 from the community. The goal of the project was to develop new strategies, new methods, and new material for working with severely and profoundly retarded children. 34 Clarion Special Education Students volunteered to staff the program on a rotating shift basis. The children lived in one of the Campus dorms, ate in the student cafeteria, and used classroom and activity facilities. Planning was begun in April and finalized in June. The local Mental Health/Mental Retardation Program assisted in the funding. Clarion Staff, Polk Staff, and the Mental Health/Mental Retardation Program will be evaluating the data in hopes of seeking funding for an expanded program, using college buildings as a model educational laboratory group home.

Expansion of Nursing Coverage - Better nursing staff utilization and coverage for all residential units has been established. The nursing staff schedules have been spread to two shifts, seven days a week, thus guaranteeing maximum coverage during specified hours with the available staff.

Centralized Medical Services - All medical offices and equipment have been transferred to the Hospital Building. This includes the Dentistry Department, all Doctors' offices, and the Podiatry office and workshop. This allows for more waiting room space for medical staff, as well as allowing patients easier access to many services in one central location.

Pharmacy Reorganization and Licensure - Pharmacy staff at Polk have been in the process of getting the Polk pharmacy licensed and accredited with HEW in Washington so that all purchasing and dispensing of drugs will fall within the legally prescribed procedure. This was initiated after Polk had been notified that they had been purchasing drugs illegally, but this has been corrected and the problem resolved. Official notification and approval is expected shortly.



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