

FILE POLK



Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens

1500 NORTH SECOND STREET • HARRISBURG, PA. 17102 • TEL: (717) 234-2621

MRS. ELSIE SCHMIDT
President

PETER P. POLLONI
Executive Director

August 23, 1976

Ms. Anna Belle Calloway
Regional Deputy Secretary
Department of Public Welfare
701 State Office Building
300 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222

Dear Annabelle,

We have enclosed a report of an on-site, unannounced visit to Polk on May 25th.

The Team has pointed out some major problems, which your office should address quickly. We have made a number of recommendations, and look forward to your response.

Action must be taken at Polk to upgrade the programming and dental care, as well as changing the physical surroundings.

Sincerely,

Marlene

Marlene Burda, Chairman PARC
Residential Services Committee

MB:rmh

cc: Schmidt, Nelkin
Polloni, Beal
Pelton, Scannell
Franz
Grumblatt
Region VI Residential Services Committee
PARC Residential Services Committee
Region V Residential Services Committee



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MRS. ELSIE SCHMIDT

President

PETER P. POLLONI

Executive Director

August 20, 1976

The Honorable Frank S. Beal
Secretary of Public Welfare
Department of Public Welfare
P. O. Box 2675,
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Frank,

I have enclosed a copy of a report of an unannounced visit to Polk by PARC on May 25th, 1976.

I hope you will take note of two serious problems highlighted by the report -- lack of privacy in toileting and bathing areas, and a critical dental problem. Beyond this it was also suggested that Polk needs the support of DPW to open a Workshop Program in the Franklin Armory.

Polk continues to be an institution undergoing major changes. Continued attention must be paid to Polk dispersal, since overcrowding is still hampering the efforts of Administration and Staff.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Elsie Schmidt
President

ES:rmh

cc: Polloni
PARC Residential Services Committee
Region V Residential Services Committee
Region VI Residential Services Committee
✓Nelkin
Scannell
Pelton
Frantz
Grumblatt



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MRS. ELSIE SCHMIDT

President

PETER P. POLLONI

Executive Director

August 23, 1976

Mr. Nicholas J. D'Aluisio
Superintendent
Polk State School
Polk, Pennsylvania 16342

Dear Nick,

I have enclosed a detailed report on the visit of the PARC Team to Polk on May 25th, 1976. The report is based on a standard format adopted by PARC in 1975. A copy of the report format is enclosed for your information.

The report reflects conditions observed in the buildings indicated on the day of the visit.

The Team discussed some of our observations with you on the day of the visit. The report discusses these observations in detail.

We must commend you for continuing to bring dynamic and innovative leadership to Polk State School. We hope that some of the programs you are trying to implement will be a high priority in the Western Region for the Department of Public Welfare.

There are many areas of Polk which need to be improved. We expect that you and your staff will continue to work toward these improvements. PARC is ready to lend whatever assistance possible in helping Polk to upgrade some of the areas noted in the report.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Marlene

Marlene Burda, Chairman PARC
Residential Services Committee

MB:rmh

cc: Beal, Schmidt, Polloni
PARC Residential Services Committee
Region V Residential Services Committee
Region VI Residential Services Committee
Nelkin, Scannell, Pelton, Frantz, Grumblatt

REPORT ON POLK STATE SCHOOL

DATE OF VISIT: May 25, 1976

TIME OF VISIT: 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

BUILDINGS VISITED: Nursery, Woodside, Gardenside, Meadowside
Northside, Southside, Lakeside

TEAM MEMBERS: Robert Nelkin - ACC/PARC staff

Doug Spencer - ACC/PARC staff

Mrs. Midge Scannell - Chairman ACC/PARC

Residential Services Committee

Marlene Burda, Chairman PARC

Residential Services Committee

I. PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS

A. Interiors

The administration of Polk is continuing its efforts to improve the interiors of the various cottages. It has been possible to make some improvements because of a reduction in the population at Polk. This has allowed for the division of large sleeping areas and day rooms into sleeping living areas. According to the Superintendent, furniture which will physically separate living from sleeping quarters has been on order. This should enhance the interiors of those cottages.

Lakeside, however, continues to need much in the way of improvement. The areas on this cottage are still overcrowded. The interiors are drab, and walls are in need of painting. There is a need for color, personal furniture to replace wooden benches, and many other items (colorful curtains or drapes, wall hangings or pictures, rugs, etc.) The superintendent advised that the Polk Parents Group had donated some monies for this purpose.

Students from Carnegie - Mellon Design classes have been working with Polk to improve the appearance of the cottages. PARC would appreciate knowing if these students have been or will be involved in improving the interiors of Lakeside?

Decreasing the population of Lakeside is also essential, so that large dormitory areas can be divided and broken down into smaller groups, as they have been in other buildings. PARC questions what further plans have been developed for dispersal of Polk residents? This was a top priority in the Western Region during 1974-75, but the Polk dispersal plan seems to have come to a grinding halt. Is this so? If so why? When will the Polk dispersal effort resume?

Generally, there is still need for privacy in the toileting and bathing areas of every building at Polk. At the present time, the long lines of toilets--with no toilet seats, no dividers, no partitions or curtains--are present in the areas visited by the Team. Since this will be a violation of ICF-MR Regs. by 1977, PARC would like to know what plans are being made to enclose these and shower areas? This is an intolerable condition which detracts from the admirable attempts on the part of the administration and staff at Polk to provide for and insure the dignity of residents.

A paradox exists in this situation. In 1973 the presence of these gang toilets was used by the media as an illustration of the archaic practices at Polk which deprived residents of their dignity. Their existence was well-documented with TV and press pictures, and was entered as evidence in the Civil Services Hearings of the Department of Public Welfare concerning Dr. McClelland. Yet, these same conditions remain three years later, unchanged in spite of many changes initiated by two superintendents at Polk since 1973.

PARC must ask why this essential part of the residents' environment--privacy continues to be denied to residents of Polk? Bathrooms there continue to be the worst example of institutional practices in Pennsylvania. This is not a problem which can be left on the door of the Superintendent. Rather, the failure of the Department of Public Welfare to correct this situation is at fault.

This Association must demand that this intolerable and deplorable situation be addressed as soon as possible by the Department of Public Welfare. PARC further asks both the Secretary of Welfare, and the Deputy Secretary for the Western Region, to outline specifically what actions are being planned to enclose toilets and bathing areas at Polk and when this project will be initiated and completed? Once more, this Association must stress that the failure to provide privacy in toileting and bathing areas at Polk violates the rights of residents to privacy, and constitutes an intolerable situation which must be remedied as soon as possible.

II. FOOD AND FOOD SERVICE

Family-style dining is still occurring at Polk in several areas: the main dining room in the main building (Northside and Southside) and in special project areas (80, 81, and the Pines). However, in many of the cottages, food continues to be served cafeteria-style, or in the new state-issued thermal trays.

It is recommended that wherever possible, family-style dining be initiated, rather than cafeteria service.

The trays, where they must be used, represent a much better food service in keeping food hot. Hopefully, trays will only be used for those residents whose physical condition is such that tray service is essential.

A goal for the majority of residents, in every cottage, should be the attainment of self-feeding skills. Trays can be helpful in attaining this goal. However, the use of trays should be an interim step in a total self-feeding program.

The Team would appreciate learning of other plans to move toward family-style dining in the cottage. The Team feels that this is a possibility since food preparation is now centralized, and kitchen areas in each cottage are being phased out.

III. CLOTHING

In several of the cottages, the clothing of the residents ranged from poor to bad. This was especially noticeable in Lakeside where residents wore badly ripped T-shirts, no shoes, state pants, etc. Several aides were questioned and could give no indication of whether or not there were any plans to purchase suitable clothing for the residents.

The Team has several recommendations to suggest in order to insure appropriate, attractive, well-fitting clothing for the residents of Lakeside. First, a clothing committee might be appointed to determine the needs of each resident for personal

clothing. This committee could then set up timetables for purchase of clothing, sources of funds, etc. This type of committee, comprised of both supervisory and aide staff has proven to be a workable solution in other State Schools.

Clothing of residents in other cottages was also observed to be substandard, including Redwood in the Woodside Building.

The Team recommends that the Administration and Staff of Polk refer to the PARC Design for Living which makes a number of recommendations on the acquisition, use, and maintenance of a personal clothing supply for each resident.

In many, many instances, the clothing observed by the Team was wrinkled and ill-fitting, as well as unsuitable for the person. This can only be corrected by making certain that each resident has a personalized clothing supply of clothes which fit, which are stylish, and suitable to the age and sex of the person. Further, this clothing should be pressed and neat when worn by the resident.

The question of delivering clean, pressed clothes to persons in a large institution is, we know, a difficult one. The Team recommends that you discuss this problem with Mr. Joe Scartelli, Superintendent of Selinsgrove. That school recently purchased a wet-to-dry finishing machine which allows delivery of clothing to units on hangers pressed and ready to wear. I am sure he would be happy to share with you Selinsgrove's experience with this system. Beyond this, it might be feasible for Polk to bring in a professional laundry consultant to suggest methods of handling clothing which would guarantee that personal clothing would be returned to residents in wearable condition. The Team recommends that Polk make every effort to eliminate the current practice of the "morning bundle" of residents' clothing. This is an extremely institutional practice which results in the wrinkled, ill-fitting clothing which was seen during our visit.

It is important to PARC, as advocates for retarded persons, that each person's dignity be assured in every way possible. One of these ways is by guaranteeing that each resident has an appropriate, attractive, and personal wardrobe. We are certain that this is, likewise, an important goal of the administration and staff at Polk. We ask that Polk share with us plans for implementing this recommendation.

IV. LINENS

Staff members questioned in all buildings indicated that residents had an adequate linen supply. However, the Team found towels and washclothes only in supply cupboards. There were no towels or washclothes in the bathroom for use after toileting. In fact, there was no soap or toilet paper in any of the bathrooms visited. In Lakeside, the water in the bathroom sinks was turned off.

These conditions are not conducive to good personal hygiene and are, in fact, unsanitary.

While the Team realizes that the functioning level of residents in several buildings is low, staff pointed out that goals in these units included development of basic self-care skills.

We ask that the Administration look into this problem and assure the presence of soap, water, toilet paper, wash clothes and towels in each bathroom, as well as appropriate programming in their use.

V. APPEARANCE OF RESIDENTS

As outlined in section III, the clothing of the residents badly detracted from their overall appearance. It was interesting to note, however, that there was much evidence of personalized hair styles. In general, the residents' grooming was good.

There is a definite need for better dental hygiene. Residents' teeth and gums were visibly in need of better care. In addition, there is a pressing need for other dental work, as evidenced by many noticeable cavities in the teeth of many residents. It was also evident that a great deal of corrective and restorative dentistry is needed to enhance the appearance of many residents.

For the most part, residents were alert, sociable, and responsive. It is worth noting that in contrast to the last visit, there were no residents unclothed on the units. This represents a real step forward, since on the previous visit, as least 10 women and several men were undressed on the units.

As mentioned previously, the appearance of residents would be greatly enhanced by attractive, properly-fitting clothing. PARC stresses the importance of appearance. A well-dressed, neatly groomed, clean persons is one who has gained skills and whose perception of himself or herself as a person has been greatly enhanced. The perception of the person by the staff is also enhanced. PARC suggests that you follow the recommendations listed in the Design for Living.

VI. PROGRAM

The Team did not visit the workshop or activity areas on this visit, since these were observed in a previous visit. However, the Superintendent indicated that because of Federal regulations (regarding number of hours residents work, etc.), many of the residents were just starting back in Workshop programs. The Superintendent also revealed plans for the use of the Franklin Armory. This program, which will serve 150 to 200 residents is critically needed by Polk. Hopefully, the Regional and Central Office of OMR will commit the necessary funds and staff to assure that the Program opens in September. The Team observed far too many residents not in programs. The use of the Armory would affect these severely-profoundly retarded residents by providing them with much needed programming and allows them to leave the grounds of the institution.

PARC is most anxious to see this program go into effect by September. Could we have a status report on progress toward this goal?

In the cottages visited, it was evident that residents were receiving very little in the area of programming or even activity. This was especially true in Lakeside. The Team observed the residents in this cottage doing nothing. Staff indicated that the majority of the residents were in a toilet training program. It was also revealed that in this building the staff ratio is 1 to 3 and that there are many aides in training.

It was obvious to the Team that a great deal needs to be done in Lakeside to improve the environment and provide meaningful training and programming for the residents there. For example, the walls need to be painted. There is a noticeable lack of comfortable furniture (wooden benches are still present), and the physical surroundings are drab and cheerless. Lakeside living areas have not yet been partitioned, and, as proved in other buildings at Polk, this does substantially improve the physical surroundings for the residents. The Superintendent indicated that the Polk Parents Group is donating funds for the improvement of Lakeside.

PARC would like to know exactly what plans are being made to improve the physical surroundings in Lakeside? When will these improvements be started, completed, etc.?

The Team was most concerned about the overall lack of programming, staff attitude, and drab physical surroundings in Lakeside. PARC would like to know:

1. Whether or not goal plans have been written for Lakeside residents?
2. If so, whether or not aide staff have been provided with specific training and expertise to implement short and long term goals?

It is very difficult to pinpoint the exact source of the obvious shortcomings of the program in Lakeside. However, it was obvious that residents of this building are receiving little more than custodial care, in most instances.

PARC would like to know what plans are being made to upgrade the activities and programming for residents of Lakeside?

From observations in all buildings, the Team concurred that there is a great need for off-grounds programming for the over-21 severely/profoundly retarded residents of Polk. Once again, the Team is extremely concerned that the projected program for the Franklin Armory be implemented. This will have a significant effect on residents who are now receiving little or no programming in the living areas or other workshop and activity areas at Polk.

VII. DENTAL AND MEDICAL CARE

It was gratifying to note that the medical staff has been increased at Polk. The Team was advised by the Superintendent that the medical staff at Polk now consists of three full-time physicians, with four more to be added by the time this report is issued, plus two assistants and two interns.

PARC would appreciate a current listing of medical staff, as well as a detailed plan for upgrading the medical care being provided for Polk residents.

PARC has been urging detailed studies of drug usage at all State Schools, as well as advocating changes in the use and abuse of tranquilizing drugs at State Schools. We would appreciate a frank and honest answer as to whether or not Polk will be initiating studies of drug usage at Polk, with the goal of reducing this usage, where appropriate.

The need for upgrading dental care remains critical. Perhaps, because of neglect over the years, it appears that the needs of Polk residents are more acute in the area of dentistry. It was obvious that even basic needs, such as fillings and extractions, as well as oral hygiene maintenance and instruction are not being met for many residents. The need for corrective and restorative dentistry is acute. PARC is, therefore, requesting a high level meeting of concerned persons. The purpose of this meeting will be to initiate an intense dental program for Polk residents. It is apparent that previous piecemeal efforts have not alleviated this problem. It is time for an action-oriented group to focus on solutions to the dental program. Would you supply PARC with a detailed analysis of what is needed in order to assure adequate dental care at Polk?

VIII. STAFF ATTITUDES

As indicated during our discussion with the Superintendent, staff attitudes observed varied from poor to excellent. There was general concurrence that aide staff reflected the degree of skill and the attitude of the building supervisor. This was evident in

Lakeside, where aides noted that they were so involved in paper work they had no time to work with residents. There was no activity in Lakeside during the visit. Aides were not interacting at all with residents, but were milling about or talking with each other. The Team questioned the staff about their responsibilities and duties in relation to individual goals for residents. Responses were vague, and it was the general impression that while aides realized that they were assigned 10 to 13 residents, and while they knew what goals had been set, they lacked the skill or know-how to act as teachers. Therefore, only basic needs seemed to be met. It was indicated that there were many aides in Lakeside in training. Hopefully, this training will provide aides with the necessary skills to work toward the goals set for residents.

This was in contrast to aides observed in Woodside, where the Supervisor, Mr. Dickert, explained his attitude and approach to training, supervision, and duties of aides in his building. Mr. Dickerts' influence was evident in the activity occurring in the various wards in Woodside. It was the opinion of the Team that the aide staff, generally, related better to residents in Woodside than in other buildings observed.

The Team also observed aides and residents in a one to one situation in the Nursery. It was lunch time and aides were feeding residents. The Team stayed for approximately 20 minutes and observed no conversation or other interaction between aides and residents. This is surprising in light of the excellent staff-to-resident relationships established during the Polk/Home for Crippled Children Training Program. Hopefully, the Team did not observe a typical meal-time situation, since this is a time when very close personal interaction can occur.

On the whole, it appears that there are young, knowledgeable, dedicated and skilled staff members working in a higher level, supervisory or team-leader capacity throughout Polk. These are persons who are dedicated to goal planning, individual programming, and new techniques in working with retarded persons. There seems to be a close working relationship, and good communication between these persons and the Administration.

However, it was the concern of the Team that aides still seemed uncertain about their role in working with residents toward achieving individual goals. There seems to exist a need for more intensive in-service training, so that aides can develop skills necessary for implementing individual goals for residents.

IX. RESIDENTS RIGHTS

There were noticeable and flagrant violations of the residents' rights to privacy, especially in toileting and bathing facilities. This is a serious violation of JCAH/ACFMR standards and ICF/MR Regs., and PARC must ask again when DPW will make efforts to bring Polk into compliance with national standards? The toileting facilities at Polk continue to be the worst in this state, and this problem must be dealt with in the immediate future.

Residents do have access to a lawyer. Pay phones are in evidence in every building. Residents do have personal possessions.

In the area of right to medical and dental treatment, much remains to be done, as noted in this report.

X. SUMMARY

Polk is an institution which has undergone drastic changes in three years. From a strictly custodial institution, Polk, due to the efforts' of the Administration and many young, experienced and dedicated professionals, is gradually moving away from this custodial model. Changes have come slowly, but they have been made.

There is a great deal that has been changed at Polk, in the physical plan and in staff attitude. But much remains to be done, especially in terms of aide training and attitudinal change. The medical care at Polk must be upgraded. Dramatic action is needed quickly to address the serious dental problems. Programming must be expanded and intensified--especially for severely-profoundly retarded people at Polk.

Finally, a further reduction in the number of residents is necessary for Polk to become a facility which can meet the needs of the residents.

PARC is confident that the administration at Polk is working very diligently for change. This Association would like to feel that the DPW is as committed to upgrading Polk as is the staff. A commitment from DPW to Polk, in terms of funds and expertise, is, at this point essential to moving Polk forward.

Respectfully submitted,

Marlene Burda, Recorder