

ALLEGHENY COUNTY CHAPTER
Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens

PROGRAM SUMMARY

COMMUNITY AND CHAPTER AFFAIRS DIVISION

The Community and Chapter Affairs Division (CCA) was developed in 1969 as ACC-PARC's advocacy arm. The job of Community and Chapter Affairs Division's volunteers and staff, as advocates, is to insure that existing services are adequate and appropriate. CCA also pressures governmental officials for news services and advocates for the rights of retarded citizens and their families. An important characteristic of CCA's business is that parents of retarded persons and active citizens spearhead the Division's activities.

The Community and Chapter Affairs Division operates in six related spheres: right to education, residential care, MH/MR community services, legislation, emergency casework, and camping and recreation programs.

Education:

The Education Committee frequently raises issues with the Pittsburgh Public Schools and the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. Recent Education Committee's activities: actions to increase the length of the school day, to provide safer and more reliable transportation of students, to improve vocational training programs, and to provide safer school buildings more suitable for the education of trainable students, and equal opportunity for physical education, speech therapy, and decent classroom conditions.

Right to Education:

The Right to Education Director and caseworker advise parents on how to improve their son's or daughter's education. These staff members are available to assist parents in preparing for school conferences or due process hearings. Both the Committee members and staff members meet regularly with the schools to insure that the Right to Education Consent Agreement is being implemented and all children are receiving appropriate public education.

Residential Care:

The Residential Care Committee is a very active monitor of the care provided in state institutions, private residential facilities, group homes, and foster care. Following frequent unannounced visits, the Committee makes recommendations to the directors of the residential programs and the state officials responsible for the quality of the residential care. It is important to note that most of Pennsylvania's residential care is inadequate, expensive, and often unsafe for the institutionalized individuals.

MH/MR Community Services:

A couple years ago this was CCA's major area of work. As a result of this citizen effort, activity centers in each area of the county train adults who are not ready for vocational training. Periodically, Ad Hoc citizen committees and CCA staff will urge an MH/MR Base Service Unit to develop a new program or improve an old one.

Legislation:

The Legislation Committee, headed by a parent of a retarded child, depends on the action of all ACC-PARC members. In December of 1972, the Chapter presented a package of proposed legislation to the Allegheny County Delegation of the State Legislature urging supplemental appropriations to MH/MR Programs, and succeeded cooperatively with other citizen groups to have Senate Bill #53 enacted as law. Senate Bill #53 relieves parents of institutionalized sons or daughters, age 18 or over, of financial liability for the cost of their care.

Emergency Casework:

The CCA staff supplements the social service staff when cases involve courts, broad civil liberties' issues, or health and safety.

Camping and Recreation:

The Camping Committee composed entirely of parents and siblings of retarded citizens makes all decisions concerning the operation of our camping program. The Committee's goal is to obtain summer overnight and day camping for retarded children and adults from existing community agencies such as YMCAs, community centers, municipalities, and girl scouts. The Committee also provides a residential camp (Camp Sunshine) for children who need one-to-one supervision.

The Camping Committee offers camperships to individuals who could not otherwise, be able financially, attend. During the 1974 summer, 1,213 children and adults attend more than 12 individual weeks of camping.

Funding:

Volunteer expenses and the salary of the CCA Director, Secretary, and Camping and Recreation Coordinator (partially) are paid by proceeds from ACC-PARC's fund drive. Most of the camping and recreation expenses, including part of the coordinators salary, is paid by contributions from community groups, a grant from the Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust, and parents' fees. The Right to Education salaries (director, caseworker, and clerical) are provided by the Allegheny County MH/MR Program.