

September 27, 1974

Mr. Norman Taylor
Department of Public Welfare Western Region
State Office Building
300 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222

Dear Norman:

Thank you for meeting with members of the Parents Group of Western State and with the ACC-ARC concerning the closing of admissions at Western State.

As we discussed at our meeting, we feel that the Department, by closing admissions, would admit to the dangerous situation that exists at Western due to understaffing and overcrowding. Such blatant disregarding of overcrowded conditions by allowing placements to continue to be made indicates to parents that the drowning of a resident and the severe recent beating of another (in addition to the daily assaults made on each other and on staff) is of little or no concern to the Department. We are therefore wondering what must happen next at Western to make the Region and the Department become interested enough to take a serious position.

We are disappointed in your position also because it, by continuing to allow placements to be made, puts no pressure on Base Service Units or any Department to find alternative residential facilities for which there is great urgency.

Your offer to accompany the group on an unannounced visit at any time but stating in advance that it would not change your position was indeed a devastating statement. To say that nothing that happens or nothing you see can change your mind is beyond our comprehension. We were also dismayed to learn that while private licensed facilities have standards which the Regional Office is making them live up to, state facilities have no standards to be met and you intend to do nothing about it.

Frankly, we came away from our meeting with you pretty well convinced that not even the death of a resident due to lack of staff is going to make the regional office offer more than a token hiring of a few more aides. We only hope that Secretary Wohlgemuth will care more deeply than your office appears to do so.

Sincerely yours,

Harry L. Goldberg, C.D.