

'More Staff, Training' Is Answer, Superintendent Says

Hamburg Facility Relies on Drugs

By The Associated Press

HAMBURG (AP) —The retarded at the Hamburg State School and Hospital who are considered potentially dangerous to themselves and others are kept heavily drugged, the superintendent acknowledged yesterday.

"You wouldn't be able to move," David Baumstein told a newsman in referring to the dosages of psychotropic drugs that are administered.

Staff members pointed to patients who moved about or sat like robots. One was huddled in a corner, his face hidden in his arms.

Baumstein said he didn't particularly like the practice, "but we have to do it until we

get more staff and more training programs."

Stiff medication is probably the most prevalent restraint practiced at the state's nine institutions for the retarded.

Until a few weeks ago, Hamburg had two steel-bar 5-by-3-foot cribs with wood slat tops in a female ward. Hyperactive women who didn't respond to the drugs were confined in them.

The cribs were dismantled after the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children inspected Hamburg.

"Had they not insisted they (cribs) would have persisted," Baumstein said.

"I won't comment on whether what we are doing now is better."

These hyperactive now have more staff in their wards and they are allowed to roam at will among their fellow patients.

Hamburg has 366 patients, 350 of whom are severely or profoundly retarded. Many have psychological and physical handicaps as well.

The staff totals 557. Half of these work directly with the patients.

The inspection of Hamburg followed this week's surprise tour of the Polk State School and Hospital in Venango County by Welfare Secretary Helene Wohlgemuth where she discovered patients confined in wooden cages. She immediately fired superintendent James H. McClelland.

At Hamburg, the staff converted the cribs into cages and they had been in use for several years.

Baumstein, who took over the job early in 1972, said his staff had to sometimes resort to straitjackets and a "time out" room for some aggressive cases.

The "time out" room, located in a male ward, has heavy wire mesh over its one window and half the door.

The ward supervisor pulls aside a couch in front of the door, which is not locked. The room is without furniture. Its paint and plaster is gouged.

The ward supervisor said the

room had been used primarily for one young male patient, "but you know where he is now, outside on the playground."

One staff member said the

youth could suddenly change from a meek individual to a ball of fury, striking at anyone or anything within reach.

"He has been difficult to handle physically," the super-

visor said. "When he acts up we'll tell him he has to go to the room. Sometimes he is ready to come out in 15 minutes. He hasn't had to go in recently."

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