

January 9, 1974

SUBJECT: Information Outline

TO: All Members of the Polk State School Dispersal Task Force

FROM: C.A. Peters - Commissioner of Mental Retardation
Department of Public Welfare - Western Region

As our combined efforts to disperse up to one third (1/3) of the Polk State School population gains momentum, individuals identified with the endeavor may be called on for comment by the media or concerned citizens and organizations. To insure continuity and consistency of information, the following is offered as a guide.

1. There is no definitive Polk Dispersal Plan. There is, however, a proposed method of dispersal subject to many uncontrollable variables (fiscal, political, legal, consumer) that may cause major alterations.

Accordingly, the dispersal effort is being closely supervised by the Department of Public Welfare, Consumer Interest Groups, and Community Mental Health-Mental Retardation interests. Note, however, that whatever the format of the effort, the following factors will govern its implementation.

1. No ex Polk State School resident will be placed in a living situation that is not superior to the individual's life style at Polk State School. This includes the creation of small homogeneous living units in any "new" institutional settings.
 2. Every feasible effort will be made to preserve existing Polk resident peer groups during the moving process.
 3. To the maximum feasible extent, compatible with legal, programmatic, and fiscal considerations, the desires of the residents and their parents or guardians will be respected.
 4. Western Region Department of Public Welfare specifically assures all community placed residents, their parents, and guardians, that in the event insurmountable problems occur, an appropriate institutional setting will be provided at Polk or elsewhere.
2. While the stated objective is to reduce the Polk State School population by up to 1,200 residents, no reduction in staff is contemplated. This will provide Polk with the personnel complement needed to deliver a quality program and capture about \$4,000,000 in Medical Assistance payments.*

*Those released to other approved institutional settings will draw down nearly \$2,000,000 in additional Medical Assistance.

3. Approximately one in four (300 out of 1,200) of the residents dispersed (i.e. the most capable) will go to supervised, supportive community living facilities under the new Federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Funds. Note that SSI is similar to and is administered like Federal Social Security payments to any handicapped (blind, elderly, etc.) citizen. Each individual will receive \$150.00 per month to cover room and board and necessities. No more than three (only two in the city of Pittsburgh) may be housed in any such "foster home."

A special temporary force of ten or more staff will be attached to the Polk staff for one year to facilitate this project.

Note that Western Region Department of Public Welfare has adopted the position that in addition to SSI, a minimum of fifty (\$50.00) dollars per week must be made available to purchase slots in workshops, adult therapy centers, etc. etc., for all who can not hold jobs.*

4. About eight hundred (800) residents (primarily from Southwestern Pennsylvania and Erie) will be dispersed to smaller institutions no one of which, at this time, is expected to house more than four hundred (400) residents. This will be achieved by:
- a. A space utilization study of all institutions (Polk State School, Western State School, Torrance State Hospital, Warren State Hospital, Woodville State Hospital, Mayview State Hospital, Dixmont State Hospital, Marcy (TB) Hospital, Connellsville General Hospital, and Western Restoration Center) in Western Region. The study is to be conducted early in 1974 and will determine the optimum use of existing institutional space. It is anticipated that this study will show ways in which a facility (or facilities or significant parts of facilities) may be better used to serve the Region's mentally disabled including the overflow from Polk State School and other mentally retarded.
5. Tentative cost estimates project an expenditure of \$415,000** in tax dollars during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1974. This will remove and support 290 of Polk State School residents.

In the year beginning July 1, 1974, up to \$11,698,000** will be expended to remove 1,000 additional residents and sustain the 290 from 1973-1974.

Actual MH-MR Program costs, due to Medical Assistance recoup, will be \$2,000,000 or more. Savings to the Commonwealth on each of three hundred (300) community placed individual will be \$4.55. Thus:

\$150	Room and Board costs (SSI)	Polk Intermediate Care	\$16.29
\$200	Program Costs (workshop, etc.)	Community Living	\$11.66
\$350	30 days = \$11.66		\$ 4.55

* Individuals on SSI may earn up to \$60.00 per month without any reduction in SSI payments

**These costs do not include Federal SSI expenditures on ex Polk State School residents residing in the community and Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation expenditures, primarily Federal, for vocational training.