

ADVOCACY REPORT

March 21, 1978

I. Educational Advocacy

10 year old - placed in school

ACC-PARC was informed by a member that a 10 year old child never attended school. The child is now registered, tested, and beginning her education at an Intermediate Unit Special Center.

Monitoring - Pittsburgh Schools

As a result of ACC-PARC's leadership, a committee of the Right to Education Task Force, led by parents, monitors the quality of educational settings. Twenty visits have been made in the last four months.

Training Parent Trainers

ACC-PARC helped develop a program to train at least 100 parents as parent trainers. The goal is that parents will be able to use the I.E.P. (Individualized Educational Plan) process to improve their child's education.

Parent School Conference - Penn Hills

ACC-PARC staff attended a parent/school conference to consider integration of child in "regular" classes. Assistance included preparation, support, and evaluation.

Expedite School Placement

ACC-PARC requested Pittsburgh Schools to make immediate placement which allowed a transfer of a girl from an institution to a group home. Prior to our intervention, the School Board refused to make the placement. The school placement was made and the child was placed in a group home.

900 vs. 990 Hours of Instruction

Our State PARC Education Committee, led by an ACC-PARC member, has demanded that the Department of Education comply with the state law requiring 990 hours of instruction per pupil per year. The current school calendar of 900 hours is a violation of the law. The Attorney General and State Senators now have told the Secretary of Education to obey the law.

Filling Educational Advocate Position

The staff position is unfilled. Over 200 applications have been reviewed. Interviews are being held.

II. Residential Advocacy

Somerset M.R. Unit

ACC-PARC visited the Somerset M.R. Unit after we received a complaint. We found serious deficiencies in staffing patterns and programs.

Somerset is one of the few programs for mentally retarded individuals accredited by J.C.A.H. (The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals). ACC-PARC brought pressure to improve the services by a report to DPW and complaint to J.C.A.H. Staff has been added and programs are being implemented as a result of our efforts.

Complaints and Investigations

ACC-PARC has received numerous complaints in the last month from parents of residents in various residential programs. The complaints include: serious loss of weight; bruises to resident; restriction of home visits; over-drugging of residents; safety code violations; unsupervised resident became lost; denial of SSI (Supplemental Security Income) benefits; lack of training; increase of injuries at a facility.

ACC-PARC has investigated each case and worked with the family to resolve the problem or prevent future problems.

Report - an in-depth residential advocacy report is available.

III. Adult Services

T.A.C. Needed - St. Francis Area

According to several parents, a T.A.C. (Therapeutic Activity Center) is needed in the St. Francis Catchment area. ACC-PARC is working with the parents to request this program from the MH/MR Center.

IV. Community Services

MH/MR Public Hearings

On February 16th, 15 parents testified about the lack of community services. The parents told the County MH/MR Board and Administrator of the serious needs of their children and family members.

The unmet needs were in four areas:

- 1) respite care for families of sons or daughters who have a wide range of abilities
- 2) programs for individuals who are both severely physically and mentally handicapped

3) programs for mentally retarded individuals who are also emotionally disturbed or exhibiting behavior problems

4) adult training programs

The parents' statements made an impact on the MH/MR Board and staff. ACC-PARC is following up and asking for concrete action to start meeting these needs.

V. Parent Group Support

Western Center

ACC-PARC brought attorneys to meet with Western Center's Parents Group to discuss a class action suit to improve the conditions and programs for the residents currently at Western Center. Discussions are continuing.

Highland Park Center

The parents at Highland Park Center are concerned about the need for more staff, more services, an alarming increase in accidents and injuries, and the unresponsiveness of the Highland Park Center administration. ACC-PARC is responding with a major review of these problems.

VI. Public Education, Training, Prevention

Television Interviews

ACC-PARC has appeared on public interest shows televised by WTAE (Channel 4) and KDKA (Channel 2). The topics were "The Plight of Handicapped Persons" and "Right to Education".

ACC-PARC is also working to have Public Service Announcements about "Right to Education" scheduled for T.V. and radio.

VII. Information and Referral

Telephone Calls

ACC-PARC receives many phone calls from parents and agencies. Often the best assistance is to provide information or referral to another agency.

The agency's reorganization plan will formalize our information and referral function. At that time, detailed statistics will also be available.

VIII. Protective Services for Future

MH/MR Public Hearing

The parents who testified at the MH/MR hearings emphasized that no appropriate residential programs exist for many of their sons or daughters. The parents pleaded for these specialized residential services to be planned, funded, and implemented.

IX. Alternatives to Institution Development

Polk Dispersal - Phase II

ACC-PARC has reviewed and agreed with Allegheny County's Polk Dispersal Phase II plans. The plan includes 12 new CLA (Community Living Arrangements) programs to be developed in the next four months.

The new programs include several special programs for children, for habit shaping, and for medical attention. A total of 110 persons will be served in these new programs.

The facilities will be dispersed in every part of the County. This will be the beginning of CLA programs in 7 sponsoring agencies. There will be a day program for each person. The people will reside in apartments or small houses for a maximum of 3 persons.

Next Year's Budget

The Governor's proposed budget for next year provides for a 37% increase in funds over the current year. This proposed expansion is in contrast to no or minimal increases in most other departments. We will support this \$8 million dollar increase by asking our members to influence their legislators.

X. Legislative

Senate Bill #94

ACC-PARC's cooperative efforts with United Mental Health and lobbyists on "the hill" resulted in the passage of Senate Bill #94 by the House of Representatives. The vote on March 14th was 113 to 80.

Senate Bill #94 allows a community residential facility to be located by right in any residential neighborhood and prevents the saturation of any neighborhood by establishing distances between any two homes.

The bill was written by a local committee which included ACC-PARC's Executive Director. Differences between the House passed version and the Senate passed version must be worked out before final passage.