



# PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION for RETARDED CHILDREN, Inc.

127 Locust Street

Harrisburg, Pa. 17101

Tel: (717) 234-2621

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February 22, 1973

Mr. Ed Goldman

Commissioner of Mental Retardation

Department of Public Welfare

P.O. Box 2675

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Commissioner Goldman:

Several of our members have visited the Hamburg State School and Hospital recently and the Residential Services Committee has asked me to write to you about our concern for the mentally retarded persons living at that institution.

The Committee feels that in many cases, the residents are not receiving treatment and training which they need due to a shortage of both professional and direct care workers. For example:

in the wards for women and adolescent girls, the surroundings have been made more comfortable and cheerful with the addition of colorful bedspreads, drapes, sofas, chairs and tables in the dayroom. However, all of these wards do not have adequate dayroom space and the women and girls are encouraged to spend leisure time in the sleeping areas. There are no chairs in the bedroom section, only beds and an occasional chest. None of these wards had a staff person present at the time of our visit.

In a locked ward, boys were lying on the floor; the base boards looked as though they had been chewed and since the paint job looked very old, I hope it was not lead paint. There were a number of electrical outlets within reach of the resident. At no time were there any male aids present.

There was a startling lack of child care and professional staff in the Total Care Areas. Women residents were working with these multi-handicapped individuals. One "helper" had

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changed the bed and completely covered the patients head with the sheet. There was no nurse there at that time. One resident was supposedly feeding another but dropping more on the floor than she was putting in the handicapped child's mouth. Tiring of the whole business, the "helper" took the plate to the nurse and said "she doesn't want anymore". The nurse said, "alright" and accepted the half full dish.

Most of these residents have serious physical defects, but Hamburg physical therapist staff consists of one unlicensed part-time therapist.

In the hospital there appears to be a similar shortage of staff although Mr. Baumstein said it is JCAH accredited.

Dinner was being served at 3:30 p.m. Lack of staff was given as the reason for the unusual hours - breakfast at 7:00 a.m., lunch starting at 9:45 a.m. and dinner starting at 3:00 p.m.

Mr. Baumstein indicated that recruitment of non-professional staff is no problem in the Hamburg area. We urge you to hire immediately, as many child care workers and aids as are necessary to meet the care and development needs of the residents at Hamburg State School and Hospital.

Additional professional staff, particularly those skilled in working with mentally retarded persons having gross physical involvement, must be recruited as soon as possible.

It is essential that residents are not employed as "helpers" on wards, unless they are properly trained and under close supervision at all times.

The people working with the multi-handicapped appear to be kind, hard-working and well motivated. Nevertheless, it seems that many of these workers are not familiar with some of the newer methods of helping severely handicapped people. For example:

the beds and residents were clean but there were no stimulating or corrective devices in the crib areas - mobiles, bars for pulling, crawling board, etc. Residents were seen being fed prone and choking.

There is not enough space for out of bed activity and little indication that these residents leave the ward.



The Residential Services Committee believes that there must be intensive individual programming for multi-handicapped residents in order to promote their development and to prevent unnecessary physical, intellectual and social deterioration.

We urge you to immediately take the necessary steps to institute an in-service training program using the multi-disciplinary team approach for all personnel working with multi-handicapped persons.

We know that Hamburg could have very exciting programs. You can be sure of our willingness to be of help.

Sincerely,

*Eleanor*

Mrs. Philip Elkin, Chairman  
Residential Services Committee

cc: Secretary Helene Wohlgemuth  
Mr. David S. Baumstein, A.C.S.W.  
Mrs. Betty Herman  
Mrs. Jan G. Saenger