

October 8, 1974

SUBJECT: Western State School Meeting Notes

TO: Mr. Norman J. Taylor
Deputy Secretary
Western Region

FROM: C.A. Peters
Commissioner of Mental Retardation
Western Region

Since Western State School does not meet any accepted staffing standards (JCAH-Medical Assistance-Alabama), the position that it is the first (or second) best staffed facility in Pennsylvania is untenable for the Department.

Moreover, the staff shortage is further aggravated by the nature of the residents (only 10% mild/moderate), and the architectural configuration of the physical plant. Our last two major incidents are directly attributable to the fact that two aides, the number on duty, can not supervise three rooms.

In order to alleviate the situation, we have the following options:

- (a) Add eighty-eight (88) staff to meet minimum JCAH Standards
- (b) Move 150-175 residents out
- (c) A combination of "a" and "b"

You should note that eighty-eight (88) staff does not include the forty-five (45) currently slated for Western State School and would only give us JCAH minimums on the high risk units.

Until such time as the situation can be alleviated via one of the above options, we have taken the following steps:

- (a) Overtime has been authorized to put one extra staff on each of the high risk units. This has to be temporary. Either we will run out of overtime funds, or staff will run out of energy from working double shifts.
- (b) A freeze has been imposed, as of August 7, on all non direct care patient positions.

- (c) For the last two years, the Superintendent has been taking full advantage of all, Federal Emergency Employment, Commonwealth Careers, etc., to hire former residents into support categories. The positions that have been vacated were converted to child care positions. As a result, seven (7) child care positions have been added. This has resulted in acute staff shortages in laundry, dietary, etc. etc., when the temporary programs were terminated.
- (d) Via Allegheny County ARC (and at no cost to DPW), we are acquiring seven (7) foster grandparents with the possibility of ten (10) more later. Again, this was done only by authorizing overtime for the Western State School bus driver so the foster grandparents can be transported. What do we do when the overtime funds are gone???

Western State School depopulation:

If we could find a facility such as Penn Manor or Park Nursing Home, one not needed for Polk Dispersal, we could move one hundred (100) plus total care residents out and gain medical assistance we are now losing at Western State School. How about all or part of Connellsville General Hospital?? Problems are finding a vendor and getting the operating capital.

Total cost would be about \$1.7 million with about fifty (55%) percent Federal reimbursement.

Western State School advises that 50-75 high functioning individuals could be moved into community living -- if appropriate sites were available. Assuming funds were available, it might be possible to lease a total apartment complex (you know how long it takes for the Department to lease anything), and move the individuals in. This would go down hard with CLA in Harrisburg, but it is the only way to do it quickly. As an alternative, we could put the money in the Western State School budget and run a direct contract. If we had a vendor and did not use Western State School staff to run the complex, we would keep up 14-20 positions. Cost of this would be about \$750,000 annually with no Federal reimbursement.

Capital Improvements:

As you know, since 1968, \$7 million worth of new GSA construction is to occur at Western State School. This offers no immediate relief. I recommend that, due to inflation and additional needed repairs discovered at Western (Example: \$32,000 impounding dam fence, \$95,000 to relocate power sources so we can demolish old buildings, \$1/4 million for new transformers), we use the whole \$10 million at Western State School.

Closing of Admissions:

This has been discussed. Closing of admissions will not provide any immediate relief, but bankrupt DPW in terms of providing needed options to the community. Besides people can always be court committed to Western State, even with closed admissions. We should, however, reconsider the concept of temporary summer placements.