



ALLEGHENY COUNTY CHAPTER
Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens, Inc.

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January 7, 1976

The Honorable Anna Belle Calloway
Deputy Secretary, DPW
702 State Office Building
300 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15222

Dear Mrs. Calloway:

ACC-PARC Board and staff reviewed the three investigative reports made by state officials following a series of injuries and deaths at WSSH in the fall of 1974. Our recommendations, adopted at our December 16, 1975 meeting, result from the findings of one or more of the three reports.

We emphasize that the implementation of these specific recommendations is vital to the safety of Western's residents. Ninety (90) days from today's presentation of these recommendations is a reasonable period to expect complete implementation. If they are carried out, hope will exist that conditions at Western will eventually improve to an adequate level.

I. Appoint Superintendent

Background: Ruth Scott is currently appointed on an acting basis. She has the full support of ACC-PARC and other parent associations. Her support is based on her performance as assistant superintendent and now acting superintendent: unyielding advocacy for residents; high expectations of staff for effectiveness and accountability; dynamic reorganization of living units and program; and open and honest administration.

Ruth Scott deserves DPW's full support, which she needs to effectively change the conditions, care, and program at Western. This is also necessary to reinforce that the medical staff is supervised by the Superintendent.



Recommendation:

- 1) Appoint Ruth Scott as Superintendent on a permanent basis.

II. Hire Additional Staff

Background: While the state was writing reports on conditions at Western, the Parents Group, ACC-PARC, and the legislators were taking immediate action to add staff at Western and other state institutions. Department officials identified Western's need for 89 direct care staff. The State Administration allotted only 40. A recent ACC-PARC survey found that less than half of the 40 were hired.

Recommendation:

- 2) Hire the additional direct care staff mandated by legislative Act 75-A, 1974.

III. Provide Adequate Medical Care

Background: The team of physicians from the University of Pittsburgh's Medical School identified conditions which needed changed and recommended specific action be taken by the state. ACC-PARC feels that all recommendations should be implemented, but is highlighting a few.

Recommendation:

- 3) Arrange an affiliation with the University of Pittsburgh's Medical School.

This will upgrade the medical staff and also enable the University to assign MD residents to aid during evening and weekend hours. After a medical school affiliation is negotiated, the agreements should be extended to all health profession schools at Pitt.

Recommendation:

- 4) Establish agreements with hospitals for emergency admissions and treatment and with medical specialists for consultations.

These agreements will mean that in time of emergencies, the way will have been paved for immediate medical attention.

Recommendation:

- 5) Establish 24 hour medical coverage at WSSH.

At least one physician should be on grounds after

5:00 p.m. and on weekends.

IV. Provide Adequate Staff Training

Background: The direct care staff is not required to possess special skills at the time that they are hired. Western has been weak in the provision of worthwhile and relevant inservice training.

Private agencies have demonstrated a model training program (in teaching of proper daily care methods such as positioning, feeding, bathing, etc.) at Polk this spring. The success was dramatic.

Recommendation:

- 6) Establish contracts for private agencies to provide inservice training for Western's staff.

This contract with the Polk training agencies or other private agencies will provide an adequate level of staff training, which in turn improves the care provided to residents.

V. Reduce Population

Background: The ACC-PARC Board has resolved twice in the last two years that admissions should be halted to Western and that the current census should be reduced. At our December 16, 1975 meeting, we affirmed this position. After much initial resistance from DPW, admissions had been closed to Western for 1½ years and the population had decreased as a result of deaths, residents returning home, or transfers. It is extremely unfortunate that DPW chose to reverse this policy by an admission you approved on 12/15/75.

Recommendation:

- 7) Refuse all admissions to Western until the institution complies with the accepted standards for adequate care issued by J.C.A.H. and Federal M.A.

Background: Over the last year, ACC-PARC Board and staff have fought each court admission requested and have demanded that the community Mental Health/Mental Retardation Program create alternatives to sending that individual to an institution. This procedure must continue, however, it can only continue if adequate funding is provided by DPW for community living arrangements, foster homes, and MH/MR supportive services.

Recommendation:

- 8) DPW must provide increased funding for residential alternatives and community mental health/mental retardation programs for the remainder of fiscal year 1975-76.

VI. Improve Personnel Performance

Background: The reports indicate that some staff are not functioning to the best of their ability or that they fill a particular position for which they are not suited. The Superintendent should have more authority and support by the Regional Office in matters of discipline, dismissal, or transfer of abusive, poorly functioning, or absentee employees.

Recommendation:

- 9) A policy and procedure should be developed by the Regional Office to give the Superintendent more authority to dismiss, discipline, or transfer abusive, poorly functioning, or absentee staff members.

We expect that you will act immediately to implement these recommendations within ninety days, since they are very important to the life, safety, and program of Western's residents. We also request that you share these recommendations with Deputy Secretary Meyers, and Secretary Beal.

Sincerely,

Robert Matesic
President

RM:cp

CC: Dr. Harry Goldberg, WSSH Parents Group