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U R G E N T

Firing

HARRISBURG, Pa. AP - Pennsylvania Welfare Secretary Helene Wohlegemuth has fired the superintendent of a state institution for the retarded after a surprise visit during which she said she saw patients locked in small wooden cages.

The institution, Polk State School and Hospital located in Venango County north of Pittsburgh, houses more than 2,600 patients.

The superintendent, Dr. James H. McClelland, had no immediate comment on his sudden ouster Tuesday. McClelland, in his late 50s, had been superintendent for more than 20 years, according to a Welfare spokesman.

In a letter informing him of his immediate dismissal, Mrs. Wohlgemuth said she personally observed "cruel, degrading and inhuman conditions" during a visit Saturday.

"This refers specifically to the locked cages and pens in which you authorized the confinement of patients," she told McClelland.

The secretary said she saw one woman locked in a 5 by 5 by 5-foot cage "made with wooden slats with a small door and a padlock," according to a department spokesman. In the men's ward, several inmates were reported confined to small cages similar to infant playpens.

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*B. Klein picked
this up in news room
Mali*