

Welfare Press Office

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AGREEMENT STRUCK IN PENNHURST CASE-- STATE TO MONITOR PLACEMENTS

HARRISBURG (Feb. 9)--An agreement has been reached between the Department of Public Welfare and the federal court-appointed Office of the Special Master that increases the state's responsibilities for monitoring the placement of Pennhurst residents in community facilities.

The Office of the Special Master was created by Judge Raymond Broderick during the Pennhurst litigation to expedite the community placement of Pennhurst residents. Questions about responsibility for monitoring the progress, and quality of placement arose after that office was created.

"This represents the first successful attempt to negotiate a monitoring agreement between the Department and the Special Master's Office," said Welfare Secretary Helen B. O'Bannon. "We are glad that our efforts over the past months have finally paid off."

Under the agreement, the state will begin in mid-March to monitor the safety and progress of persons who have moved from Pennhurst to community facilities. This will include reviews of community programs and the individual habilitation plans for former Pennhurst residents -- activities carried out previously by the Office of the Special Master under federal court order.

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The Office of Special Master will move from monitoring these activities to broader supervision of the state's implementation of federal court orders in the Pennhurst case.

The state will increase monitoring capabilities by giving county case managers supplemental training. Administrative changes will be made as needed to accommodate shifting responsibilities in both offices.

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