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State Inst Gen

June 2, 1961

TO: SUPERINTENDENTS --Attention: Rehab Therapy Supervisors
Anoka State Hospital
Fergus Falls State Hospital
Hastings State Hospital
Hoose Lake State Hospital
Rochester State Hospital
St. Peter State Hospital
Willmar State Hospital
Brainerd State School & Hospital
Cambridge State School & Hospital
Faribault State School & Hospital
Gillette State Hospital
Owatonna State School
Minnesota State Sanatorium
MENTAL HEALTH EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

FROM: David J. Vail, M.D.
Medical Director

RE: Patients employed as domestics

I hate to bring this up immediately after the recent House provision banning maid service, as I do not wish to confuse issues. I think there should be some clarification, however, and I would be writing this in any event.

It should be clear that patients are not to be assigned as domestics in any staff house or apartment simply as a matter of convenience to the officer or his family, or as a fringe benefit.

This type of assignment is permissible under certain very definitely controlled conditions:

- (1) It is done on a prescription basis as an industrial therapy assignment.
- (2) The assignment of domestic service trainee is part of the organized overall industrial therapy program.
- (3) There are definite commencement and termination dates, in other words an organized tour or course of training. This implies turnover, with "graduates" thereby re-trained to handle their own home economies responsibilities in the community or trained to obtain employment as domestics.
- (4) The supervisor, like any other supervisor in a hospital industry, furnishes evaluations to the I.C. department at regular intervals, and real supervision and on-the-job training are provided. This inevitably places the staff officer's family in the role of a state employee.

Whereas the idea of a domestic service training program is valid, the idea of providing help as a fringe benefit for staff is not. It should be apparent that I am decidedly opposed to the latter as a perpetuation of old-style state hospital plantation colonialism at its worst. It has a degenerating effect on patients and fundamentally on the staff as well. Unfortunately, even at the level of an organized I.T. program, it has been my experience that unless very careful controls are maintained it is very difficult to keep it from deteriorating into a cheap labor system.

I am asking Mr. Wrobel to prepare a report on such activities. I trust that you and your rehab people will give him every assistance in this.