

Access Press

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History Note

Each month of 2007, Access Press will feature an important person or persons in disability history: local, regional or national

'Unbelievable' Lack of Staff

MinnARC's 1964 Survey Led to Increased Care at State Hospitals

by Luther Granquist

On September 9, 1964, the Minnesota Association for Retarded Children (MinnARC) surveyed the staffing levels in Minnesota's state hospitals for persons with mental retardation. They counted the number of persons in each building and the number of direct care staff persons actually on duty for each shift. At Faribault, the ratios were appalling—1:23 in the morning, 1:32 in the afternoon and 1:82 at night. A direct care staff person from Building 21 at Brainerd said, "We barely have time for custodial care."

MinnARC presented its report to the 1965 Legislature, together with a picture booklet, *A Major Minnesota Problem*, with large maroon lettering on gold paper. The booklet included photographs from the state hospitals, such as this one of a barefooted woman huddled on the floor.

MinnARC recommended 833 new positions to meet national standards. Governor Karl Rolvaag, who said, "The lack of staff is absolutely unbelievable," included 578 in his proposed budget. The legislature approved only 421, which was, nevertheless, more than had ever been approved before. ■

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This photo of a Minnesota state hospital resident was part of the MinnARC's report to the state legislature in 1965.



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