

THE FEEBLE-MINDED

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The path to the institution for the feeble-minded too frequently comes down through generations preceding the birth of the individual. For some it begins through accident preceding or at the time of birth; for others in accidental causes in childhood or in early childhood diseases. For all intellectual growth is arrested in early years.

Frequently the condition is aggravated by lack of understanding of the limitations of the child by those who care for or come in contact with it, and often the condition is not recognized until the child has entered school or has been brought to the attention of the child welfare board on account of delinquency or dependency. However, it is not the intention, at this time, to go into the question of the cause of feeble-mindedness or the care, training and treatment of the feeble-minded, but rather to consider the procedure to be taken when a child is found who on account of mental defect, is thought to be in need of institution-alization or supervision by the State.

The State of Minnesota, always in the vanguard in social legisla-tion, has given special consideration to the feeble-minded and has wisely dealt with this problem. In the time available we can best come to an understanding of the procedure necessary to obtain entrance to and exit from the institution by reviewing the law governing admission, parole and discharge.

Under Chapter 344, General Laws of 1917 as amended by Chapter 77, General Laws of 1919, persons who are adjudged to be feeble-minded are committed to the care and custody of the Board of Control.

To have a person so committed: "When any person residing in this State shall be supposed to be feeble-minded any relative, guardian or reputable citizen of the county in which such supposed defective person resides or is found, may file a verified petition in the Probate Court of the county, setting forth the name and residence of the supposed feeble-minded person and the facts necessary to bring such person within the perview of the act. Whereupon the Probate Judge shall after investi-gation, if the petition be sufficient, direct that the alleged defective person be brought before him, and when necessary the court may issue a warrant directed to the sheriff or any constable of the county, or to any person named therein, requiring him to bring such defective person before the court for examination.

8957. "County Attorney to Appear: Whenever a Judge of Probate orders an examination he shall notify the county attorney of the time and place of said examination, who shall appear on behalf of the person to be examined and take such action as may be necessary to protect his rights. The court may and on request of the county attorney shall issue subpoenas for witnesses.

8958. "Board of Examiners—How Appointed: When such person is produced in court the Probate Judge shall designate two licensed physicians resident in the State who with the Probate Judge shall constitute a board to examine such person and determine as to his defect-iveness. Where the proceeding is for the adjudication of feeble-mind-edness, the Probate Judge shall notify the State Board of Control of the filing of the petition and that a hearing will be had thereon not less than ten days thereafter, whereupon the Board may at its discretion designate some person skilled in mental diagnosis to attend the hearing, examine the alleged defective and advise the board of examiners. Pro-vided that if the alleged defective person is obviously feeble-minded or an inebriate the Probate Judge may dispense with the appointment of any board of examiners, with the consent of the county attorney, and may himself hear and determine the matter.

8959. (As amended by Chapter 136, General Laws of 1927.) "Examination and Report: The board of examiners shall hear all prop-er testimony offered by any persons interested and the court may cause witnesses to be subpoenaed. When the examination is completed, the board shall determine whether or not the person examined is a feeble-minded person, an inebriate or an insane person and shall file in the court a report of their proceedings, including the findings, upon such forms as the State Board of Control may authorize and adopt.

8960. (As amended by Chapter 231, General Laws of 1927.) "Commitment of Feeble-Minded Persons: If the person examined is found to be feeble-minded, the court shall order him committed to the care and custody of the State Board of Control, as guardian of his person. Thereafter the Board shall have power whenever advisable to place him in an appropriate institution, or in a home established or approved by the Board of Control for the purpose of giving care and supervision to a group of such feeble-minded wards engaged in gainful occupation, or to exercise general supervision over him anywhere in this State outside any institution through any child welfare board or other appropriate agency thereto authorized by said Board of Control."

As a basis for intelligent action the board of examiners and court must have complete and accurate information as to the person's his-tory and condition. This includes the following:

Family History with as complete information as possible, especial-ly concerning defectiveness in relatives.

Home Conditions including economic condition; character of dwell-ing; number of persons in the home including lodgers; reputation in the community; attitude of family as to school attendance of children; and especially attitude of the family toward the child under consideration.

Chronological Age and Mental Age as determined by a competent mental examiner or psychometrist.

School Record.

Medical Record.

29-TNE-DDM
TFM-JMM

*Work Record.**Record of Delinquency.*

A form for tabulating this information may be obtained from the office of the Judge of Probate, and this form should be filled out as completely as possible and filed with the court.

A child obviously feeble-minded should be sent to the institutional school when six or seven years of age unless the home conditions are especially good, the mental level is such that he or she can receive suitable training in a special class, and such a class is available. If entrance is delayed it is far more difficult to train the child for adjustment in the community. At present far too many feeble-minded, particularly girls, are sent to the institutional school when quite grown up and then only after they have gotten into serious difficulties. With these the chances of successful adjustment outside of the institution is materially lessened.

Criteria for selection for *outside supervision* of children committed to the guardianship of the State Board of Control as feeble-minded are:

- Non-aggressiveness in boys,
- Eligibility for work,
- Facility for special class placement,
- Reliability of home available,
- Understanding by the family of the child's limitations.

Criteria for selection for *institutional care* of children committed to the guardianship of the State Board of Control as feeble-minded are:

- Complaint in boys of menace to others,
- Complaint in girls of sex indulgence,
- Aggressive personal reactions,
- Broken disorganized home,
- Unreliability of home,
- Lack of understanding by family of the child's limitations.

So much for the paths into the institutional school for the feeble-minded; and now turn to the paths out.

Owing to the large number of the feeble-minded and the fact that only a small proportion can be cared for in the institutional school it is extremely desirable that after special training and sterilization, as many as possible be returned to community life. This is the policy of the Board of Control.

Homes or clubs have been established or approved by the Board of Control for the purpose of giving care and supervision to groups of girls paroled from the institutional school. There girls are engaged in gainful occupations. They are no longer a burden on the taxpayer and are economically independent.

Girls are paroled and placed in selected private homes where they aid in the housework, have suitable social contacts and careful supervision. Boys who are suitably trained and industrious are placed on farms.

The criteria for *outside supervision* after training in the institutional school are:

- Industriousness,
- Limitation of social contacts,
- Reliability of the home,
- Understanding of limitations by those with whom the person is to be placed.

Frequently a feeble-minded child who comes to the institutional school from a poor environment will in a few months of special care, with proper food and regular hours for sleep, attention to bathing and exercise, and through simple hygienic measures, so improve in appearance that family and friends cannot see the necessity of his remaining longer in the school; but if returned to the old environment too soon all progress made will soon be lost.

The Board of Control and the institutional school officials are always most eager to arrange for the parole of all persons suitable for outside supervision when an appropriate environment is available. Application for parole should be made to the Board of Control, who will advise with the institutional officials as to the suitability of the child for parole and with the county child welfare board as to the suitability of the home.

The club houses conducted by the Board of Control and other agencies are admirable stepping-stones in the development of the individual for life in the community.

Where a parent, guardian, relative or friend of a person committed to the care and custody of the State Board of Control is unwilling to abide by the ruling of the Board as to the necessity for further care and custody, they have recourse to the court. However, such action is inadvisable and seldom taken as the Board of Control is only too willing to be relieved of guardianship when in their judgment further care and custody is not required for the welfare of the individual or the protection of the public.

THE EPILEPTIC

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The path of the epileptic is a very turbulent one and has many ramifications, in fact, the different types of patients we encounter in this work might fit into *any* of the classifications that you have heard about this morning. As we all know, epilepsy is a progressive, degenerative process, so that the majority of these patients sooner or later degenerate sufficiently to become feeble-minded, a description of which you just had given you by Dr. Murdoch of the School for the Feeble-Minded. It is also true that a very large percentage of these people are afflicted with psychoses of some kind which means