

31-5111-206

MINNESOTA
SOCIAL SECURITY BOARD
LIBRARY

March 11, 1931.

To His Excellency, Governor Olson and the
Honorable Members of the State Legislature:

FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS IN MINNESOTA:

The term feeble-minded is used generically to include all degrees of mental defect due to arrested or imperfect mental development as the result of which the person affected is incapable of competing on equal terms with his normal fellows or managing himself or his affairs with ordinary prudence.

Idiots are those so deeply defective that the mental development never exceeds that of a normal child of two years.

Imbecils are those whose development is higher than that of an idiot, but does not exceed that of a normal child of about seven years.

Morans are those whose development is higher than that of ~~an imbecile, but does not exceed that of a normal child of~~ about 12 years.

It is now generally recognized that the intelligence test, while extremely valuable as an aid to the diagnosis of feeble-mindedness, is only one of many factors that must be taken into account in determining feeble-mindedness.

It may be safely assumed that idiots and imbeciles have such marked intellectual defects as almost inevitably to be socially inefficient and therefore feeble-minded. The so-called morons, although classified as intellectually deficient, may or may not be feeble-minded. Their entire personality and behavior must be considered, the test being whether or not they are reasonably competent, economically and socially.

CAUSES OF FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS.

Feeble-mindedness is inherited in the majority of cases. Feeble-minded parents produce feeble-minded children, and it is a well known fact that the feeble-minded are extremely prolific, tending to have large families. Data collected at the Minnesota School for Feeble-Minded indicates that more than 50% of those in this school are of the familial or hereditary type.

Although the importance of heredity in the causation of feeble-minded has been questioned, it is still considered the dominant factor by most experienced students of the subject. Persons of the hereditary type generally display defective physical as well as defective mental development, indicating a general inferiority.

Although heredity may well be considered the dominant cause of feeble-mindedness, frequently feeble-minded children are born of parents who are of average, or high intelligence and careful investigation discloses no trace of hereditary taint. Non-hereditary causes are accidents to the child in utero or more frequently at childbirth, causing brain injury. These cases are often associated with paralysis.

Infectious diseases in childhood with inflammation of the brain or its covering membrane, is not an infrequent cause. Another group is one in which failure of brain development is due to disorders of the thyroid or other glands of internal secretion.

EVIL EFFECTS OF FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS

Whether we consider it from the social or economic standpoint, feeble-mindedness may well be considered a major problem.

Defective individuals are found in all ranks of society and under various conditions. They are entitled to appropriate training, but cannot profit by the regular course of instruction

given in our public schools. In such schools they impede the progress of normal children.

They cause sorrow at home, disorder in school, and if untrained and uncontrolled, are dangerous elements in the community. Owing to their inability to comprehend the principles of hygiene, and law and order, they add materially to the spread of contagious diseases and come in conflict with the law. Untrained they are not capable of self-support or of managing their own affairs.

If unprotected feeble-minded girls are taken advantage of and become the carriers of venereal diseases and give birth to children as defective as themselves. The high grade feeble-minded, the morons, need only the proper environment for the development of criminal tendencies.

The term "defective delinquent" is applied to those feeble-minded persons in whom anti-social and criminal tendencies are found to be so deep-seated as to require care and treatment quite distinct from that required by the majority of the feeble-minded. These defective delinquents are found in any large group of offenders. Unless custody for an indeterminate period is provided, they appear with regularity before the courts as recidivists, and constitute a heavy burden on society.

PREVALENCE OF FEEBLE-MINDEDNESS

The only large scale psychological survey of a fairly typical cross-section of the American population was provided by the examinations of the men recruited into the Army during the World War. So many cautions need to be observed in interpreting the findings of those army tests that it seems unsafe to base a definite estimate upon them.

A recent careful survey in England by Dr. E. O. Lewis showed about eight feeble-minded persons per thousand of the general population. This would give an estimate of slightly less than one million feeble-minded persons in the United States and on this basis of 8 to 100, we would have in Minnesota a

population of 20,000 feeble-minded persons (figuring Minnesota population 2½ million.

Thus the number of mental defectives in the state can be estimated fairly accurately, but for the number of mental defectives who at any given time should have state guardianship, that is, who are feeble-minded, only estimates can be given.

In practice any person with an intelligence quotient below 75 is likely to be committed as feeble-minded in Minnesota when appearing in court on hearing in feeble-mindedness. Probably all with an intelligence quotient below 70 should have permanent guardianship throughout their lives from the state if it is not furnished by relatives or friends.

There is no information from which a reliable estimate could be made as to the number of mental defectives not receiving satisfactory guardianship without state assistance. The number lies some where around 50,000. That is, about 50,000 would be committed as feeble-minded by the Minnesota courts if they were presented for a hearing and if the same standards were followed as are now followed for those who are presented for court hearing.

The records of the Department for the Feeble-minded under our Board show that on Feb. 1, 1931 there had been committed as feeble-minded to the guardianship of the Board of Control since Jan. 1, 1918, 4,277 persons and in addition there are in the institutions of Cambridge and Faribault 769 others making a total of 5,046.

693 - died 144 - discharged - total 825

leaving under state care on Feb. 1, 1931, 4,209. These persons are distributed as follows:

Faribault - - - - -	2,083
Cambridge - - - - -	445
Other state institutions - - - - -	124
Private institutions - - - - -	126
Out of state - - - - -	119
Lost or escaped - - - - -	183
Listed for institutional care - - - - -	588
Listed for outside supervision	<u>541</u>
	4,209

APPROVED METHODS OF DEALING WITH THE FEEBLE-MINDED AS AN AID TOWARD PREVENTION OF THE EVILS THEREOF.

A practical program for dealing with the feeble-minded as outlined in the White House Conference on Child Health and protection, held in 1930, is divided into three main stages:

A. - Diagnosis with registration

B. - Treatment comprising education and training in special classes in the public schools, appropriate institutional schools, and custodial care for those who cannot or should not remain in or be returned to the community.

C. - Guidance and supervision for those kept in or returned to the community because they are judged likely to be socially adequate in sufficient degree if properly guided and supervised when necessary or because even though they are not able to care for themselves, supervised home care is available and desirable.

To carry out this program, Minnesota is in need of more special classes in the public schools and increased institutional provision, including a separate institution for male defective delinquents, for whom there is no satisfactory provision in any of the existing institutions of the state. For this class discipline is necessarily more rigid than in the ordinary school for the feeble-minded.

Such an institution relieve the existing schools of a discordant element, have a beneficial effect upon morale and discipline, and make possible a program specially desirable for this unruly group.

Such an institution would be a distinct service to the courts in the handling of feeble-minded criminals, who are coming before them in increasing numbers. Institutions for defective delinquents have proved to be of great value in the states in which they have been established.

Although feeble-mindedness must be reckoned with as a major problem, early recognition, appropriate treatment and training, prevention of reproduction and supervision can do much to render it less serious. The hopeful fact is that following this program many of the feeble-minded can be trained so that under supervision they become social assets, rather than social liabilities.

More special classes in our public schools, additional accommodations in our institutional schools for the feeble-minded and epileptic, and a special institution for defective delinquents are urgently needed to cope with this most serious problem.

Sterilization is a useful procedure in certain cases. It does not decrease the need of subsequent supervision, but merely eliminates the risk of reproduction in community supervision. The indiscriminate sterilization of the feeble-minded in large numbers, without subsequent supervision, would create more and worse social problems than it could prevent. It cannot

be regarded as a method of social improvement.

- F C 31-PMC-306

STATE OF MINNESOTA
BOARD OF CONTROL LIBRARY

A Plan for Minnesota for the Care, Control, and Training
of Her Mental Defectives.

A. Institutions.

1. A new institution for the higher grade defectives only, named the "Minnesota Home and Industrial Training School",

This institution should admit (a) moron grade children without homes or with homes that are inadequate for their proper rearing; (b) it should admit moron adults not capable of extra-institutional care and control, but not habitually delinquent.

This institution should aim to train and employ all cases with the view of ultimately paroling them under a plan of extra-institutional care and control. It should furnish proper employment within the institution for all adult cases until paroled, and should remunerate them in proportion to merits.

The equipment should be: (a) Dormitories on the small cottage plan; (b) Shops for industrial training and for employment; (c) fifty to one hundred acres of land, chiefly for building purposes, and recreational grounds; (d) a well equipped training school; (e) organizations for marketing products from its shops not used by other state institutions; (f) a progressive superintendent thoroughly familiar with the sociologic and educational problems of the high grade mental defective.

2. "Minnesota Institution for Defective Delinquents". This should be organized and equipped along lines similar to that of the Minnesota Home and Industrial Training School, but would not have occasion to admit children below ten perhaps. Defective delinquents are practically all of moron grade, with relatively few of high imbecile grade. If a tendency to delinquency is already established, reform is probably impossible. One institution could admit both sexes, with proper segregation. Probably over three hundred cases now in Minnesota Reformatories should be in this institution for defective delinquents.

3. "Minnesota Hospital and Training School for Epileptics." The general aim of this institution should be to bring about much needed specialization for epileptics, so as to reach particularly incipient cases and others without marked mental deterioration or mental deficiency.

The equipment should include (a) special hospital; (b) dormitories in the cottage plan; (c) a training and re-education department to furnish general school training, special occupational training in occupations suited to epilepsy, and re-education of cases with established bad mental habits and character traits common in epilepsy; (d) lands suitable for "truck" farming;

(e) an organization of field agents to reach incipient cases and others not likely to seek aid from the institution in proper time and their own initiative; and to act as an employment agency for cases dismissed from the institution.

It should admit only cases without marked mental deterioration or deficiency. Its director should be a specialist in epilepsy.

4. Reorganization of present School for Feeble-Minded and Colony for Epileptics.

(a) Change of name to "Minnesota Home for Feeble-Minded".

(b) Removal of all moron grade feeble-minded to the new "Minnesota Home and Industrial Training School."

(c) Removal of all epileptics not disqualified through marked mental deterioration or mental deficiency for the new "State Hospital and Training School for Epileptics" to this latter institution.

(d) Retention and admission of only such cases of feeble-mindedness as require permanent institutional care. This should include epileptic of idiot and imbecile grade of intelligence.

B. Extra-institutional care and control through Children's Bureau.

1. Classes of cases. (a) Cases paroled from new Home and Industrial Training School. (b) Other cases committed to guardianship of Board of Control and not requiring commitment to an institution.

2. Aims. (a) To find proper homes, if not left with parents, and instruct same in management of cases. (b) To find employment for cases and keep them employed. (c) To cooperate with employers.

3. Requirements. Field Agents (a) to investigate homes, (b) to act as employment agencies, (c) to periodically visit homes, the cases, and employers.

C. Compulsory Special Classes for Mental Defectives in Public and Private Schools.

1. Organization of these classes should be compulsory on order from some State Department. (State Department of Education or Board of Control). The present optional plan has too many defects and abuses.

2. Classes of cases (a) Morons, ages five to twenty, with adequate homes, and capable of industrial training. (b) Borderline cases, ages five to twelve, who are unusually poor in regular school work.

3. Requirements. (a) State aid as at present. (b) Specially trained teachers, as at present. (c) Proper equipment for industrial and occupational training. (d) Field agents from Children's Bureau to visit homes to instruct parents and cooperate with them in training and managing cases.

D. Research Bureau.

1. Function. (a) Mental examination of all cases in charge of Board of Control, when such examination is called for. (b) Investigation of any problem related to the training, care and control of mental defectives, as directed by the Board of Control. (c) Study of methods of investigation used by Bureau with view of improvement. (d) Publication and dissemination of results.

2. Requirements. (a) Offices and quarters adapted to the nature of the work. (b) Mental examiners in sufficient numbers, to make all examinations at a maximum rate of 800 cases per year per examiner. (c) Field workers to investigate social, home, and family conditions. (d) Clerical help.

E. Methods of Commitment, Parole and Transfer.

1. Commitment. (a) To Board of Control. Present method of court commitment should be modified (1) so that probate judge would not have power to deny a hearing to determine feeble-mindedness when in his judgment the case is obviously not feeble-minded; (2) so that the examining board would always be made up of the probate judge, an examiner from the Research Bureau, and one other person residing in the county with the case to be given a hearing. This third person should be one permanently appointed or designated by law to serve on this examining board for the hearing of all cases. This would tend to improve the choice of this third person, and also give him occasion to qualify himself further for this duty, and give him definite responsibility in the matter.

(b) Commitment to institutions after commitment to Board of Control. Further investigations by Research Bureau and report to Children's Bureau, when called for. Disposition of cases determined jointly by Children's Bureau and institution concerned.

(c) Delinquents should be committed to care of Board of Control as mental defectives are now. Board of Control should decide on institution to which case is to be committed.

2. Parole and Transfer. (a) Re-examination and investigation by Research Bureau. (b) Parole or transfer determined jointly by Children's Bureau and institutions concerned.

F. Additional New Laws.

1. Law making establishment and maintenance of special class for mentally defective children in public, parochial and private schools compulsory on order of some State department, preferably Board of Control.

2. Law modifying procedure in court commitment as indicated above.

3. Law permitting Board of Control to make necessary investigation in any schools to determine presence of mentally defective children, and to have same committed to their charge, by court.

4. Law making it obligatory on all marriage license clerks to refuse marriage license to mental defectives whose names and means of identification have been furnished by Board of Control.

G. University Training Courses.

1. Special Summer School courses for the following:

- (a) Teachers of mental defectives
- (b) Social Workers

2. Extended Courses for the following:

- (a) Supervisors of special classes for mental defectives
- (b) Mental Examiners
- (c) Clinical psychologists

3. Requirements.

- (a) Special instructors
- (b) Groups or classes of mental defectives for observation
- (c) Children of all ages and school grades for training of mental examiners and clinical psychologists

There should be a definite and permanent arrangement between the University and the public schools of Minneapolis and St. Paul whereby University students in these courses could observe, teach, and examine children. Or, in place of this, the University should extend its plan now in force in the maintenance of a University High School, so as to include all school grades, with a department for mental defectives.