

MAYO CLINIC

Rochester, Minnesota

September 29, 1966

Mr. Morris Harsh
Commissioner of Welfare
Department of Public Welfare
Centennial Building
St. Paul, Minnesota

Dear Mr. Hursh:

This is in the nature of an interim report on the activities and recommendations of your Advisory Committee on Daytime Activity Centers. I am sure that all or much or what I have to report has been presented to you in a more extensive and precise fashion by your department members. However, we are acutely aware of the fact that legislative proposals are currently being drafted and we have therefore been primarily concerned for the last few months in trying to anticipate our needs for the coming biennium.

The following changes in the present state law are favored by the committee:

1. Removal of per capita limitation on the amount which may be expended in any given county. This would then bring day activity center policy into line with what the department is asking for mental health clinics.
2. Adoption of the distressed county formula similar to that for mental health clinic support.
3. Provision to allow rent and amortization costs, with approval of the Commissioner, as allowable items for state matching. Again, this would be in line with what is now granted for mental health clinics (rent) as well as what is being sought for them (amortization).
4. The appropriation bill for this current biennium did not provide for the carry over of unexpended funds into the second year of the biennium. This proved to be a definite problem, although we were able to cope with it. We would favor inclusion of a statement that "unexpended balance would carry over into the next year".

Mrs. Ames and Mr. Strand have conducted surveys as to what the existing centers might require in terms of state support for the next biennium and the costs of financing new centers which are known to be organizing. We also have data on what the cost of allowing rent as a matching item and elimination of the per capita limitation might do to the budget. We have also noted an acceleration of interest in the development of new centers in both our metropolitan areas as well as rural areas. Based on past experience and our knowledge that much of the state is as yet not being served by centers, we anticipate that there will be a much greater number of new centers seeking funds in the next biennium than in the past two. Accordingly, the committee has recommended that \$1,500,000 be requested for the day center program this coming biennium.

Included in the appropriation it is recommended that \$7,500 be allocated for in-service training of day center staff personnel and \$2,500 for costs of vitally needed publications for day centers, such as manuals for center development, programming, counseling, etc.

Transportation of the participants has proven to be one of the greatest barriers to the development of adequate service in many areas of our state. The committee feels that a state subsidy for transportation comparable to that allowed the child in public school is certainly justified and would be a great boon to the development of the day center program statewide. It has been concluded that it would for most appropriate to seek funding of this through the Department of Education.

The committee has been and will continue to be concerned with improvement of standards for day centers, improvement of day center staff personnel through in-service training, the development of manuals to aid boards and staffs in the development of day center programs, preparation of recommendations to you for regulations governing day centers as required by law, and exploration of sources of federal funds which might augment the program.

Speaking as an outsider, though by no means a disinterested one, I feel free to call to your attention certain observations of mine which have not been taken up by the committee as a whole since it is composed in large part of people in government service. I think that one of the greatest hindrances to the development of more and better centers has been the lack of personnel in DPW to administer the program. I have nothing but admiration for those over-worked people in your department who have struggled to make the centers the success that they are, and under the circumstances, I think the size and quality of the program is astounding. Nevertheless, I feel strongly that virtually all of our centers urgently need and would benefit greatly from frequent visits by a state consultant. I know of no center which would not welcome more state supervision and professional advice on program development. We cannot effectively upgrade standards without making state consultants available to evaluate and enforce them. Centers will continue to proliferate under our present haphazard system as funds are available but they will never achieve the goal of enabling each child to develop his full potential without great improvements in staff and standards. I think the only way in which this can be accomplished is to strengthen the state's administration of the overall program. I hope that the department will take a firm stand in its request for additional personnel plus a realistic salary scale to enable you to fill the authorized positions. I know that you are aware that you have not been granted one additional staff person in your department to administer this program since its inception and you are by now currently responsible for some 40 centers which spend one-half million dollars annually (including local costs)!

Finally, when and if the problem of state personnel is solved, there will remain the matter of the most appropriate method of administering the program. I do not mean to presume to advise you as to the management of your department and I certainly have no criticism of any of those people in your department who worked so long and so hard to get us where we are today. However, I know you are aware of the recurring and chronic staff vacancies as well as the shifts in responsibility relating to the day center operations. This has not only resulted in some confusion in the department as to individual roles and responsibilities but has had those running the centers outstate bewildered at times as to what was going on.

It seems only logical to me that the administration of the day center program should be closely coordinated with the department's responsibility for residential care, both state institutional and private, and the guardianship function. I think that a separate division of mental retardation in the department would be the finest and most efficient way of discharging the department's responsibilities in this area. I believe that this should encompass day centers, guardianship, residential treatment facilities and a group of regionally based community services consultants to serve these functions. I certainly hope that serious consideration will be given to some such plan of organization in the months to come.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed)

R. H. Ferguson, M.D.