

**BASIC PHILOSOPHY RE: FAMILY LIFE-SEX EDUCATION AND FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED.**

**PREMISE:** Mentally retarded persons should have sex education and family planning services, both in the institutions and in the community, according to individual needs and individual capacity to comprehend and use such education and services.

**BASIS FOR PREMISE:**

1. A basic right of individuals in this country is the right to education. An area of education should not be arbitrarily excluded.
2. The Department of Public Welfare has issued a policy Bulletin stating that family planning services shall be given to clients.
3. "The mentally retarded" range from profoundly retarded to borderline and functionally retarded. They range in age from birth to old age. Many may be exposed to a nearly full gamut of life experiences.
4. The basic goals for both community and institution programs for the mentally retarded are to help the individual to function more adequately in the community or in the institution, to help the individual to live as normal a life as possible, and to help the individual to live as happy a life as possible.
5. "The mentally retarded" are human beings, many of whom have the same sex drives and need for sexual satisfaction as human beings of normal mentality.
6. The majority of the mildly retarded have physically normal bodies, and the majority of the mildly mentally retarded will spend most of their lives outside of institutions. Therefore, many may be involved in some degree of sexual contact during their lives. A basic sex education may help these persons conduct themselves more appropriately\*
7. Many mildly retarded persons will marry, with or without proper consents and counseling. A basic education in acceptable sexual behavior, on reproduction, and on methods of family planning may help these individuals to function better as spouses and as parents.
8. Skills in marital counseling, as well as methods of family planning have improved so that, with the inclusion of family life-sex education, more meaningful human relations, more stable marriages, and more adequate child bearing and child rearing may be expected.

\*Family life-sex education is interpreted here in the broadest sense to include the concept of human sexuality having complex physical, psychological and social dimensions. Family planning (birth control) provides means for individuals to decide if and when to have children, the number of children they wish, and the time between children.

With the mildly and more severely retarded, education on appropriate tax related behavior may help them to conduct themselves less conspicuously, which could lessen exploitation and could lessen community fears of inappropriate sexual behavior.

#### **PROPOSED POLICY STATEMENT**

Family life-sex education and family planning services shall be included in the general education and treatment plans for mentally retarded persons. These services shall be given in accordance with the retarded person's needs and his capacity to comprehend and use such instruction. Encouragement and assistance shall be given to staff members involved in implementing these services.