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STATE OF MINNESOTA

*Division of
Public Institutions*

BIENNIAL REPORT

FOR THE

Period Ended June 30, 1944

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Bureau for the Feebleminded and Epileptic

To the Director, Division of Public Institutions:

The biennial report of the Bureau for Feebleminded and Epileptic for the biennium 1940-42 listed the main functions of the bureau, gave some statistics interpreting them and indicating trends, and made recommendations. This report for the biennium 1942-44 is an extension of the previous one as the functions are the same, although there may have been additional responsibilities in carrying them out. The trends shown are in the main also the same though somewhat more clearly defined so that interpretations may be made with more certainty.

The decrease in the biennial number of commitments to guardianship as feebleminded or epileptic has continued. Comparing the bienniums of the past decade with the present one we have:

1932-34	-----	1000
1934-36	-----	1158
1936-38	-----	1212
1938-40	-----	1182
1940-42	-----	900
1942-44	-----	696

This past biennium showed a yearly decrease also as did that for the two previous periods. The trend seems definitely downward as there were 383 committed in 1942-43 and 313 in 1943-44. It seems now it is more than probable that improved economic status for many persons of low mentality has had a decided bearing on the number of persons for whom petitions were filed. This was suggested in the previous report, together with the fact that there may have been better case work done thereby lessening the need for guardianship of some persons of low mentality but not in need of institutional care. This would seem to bear out the possibility that better economic conditions and improved case work in the counties may have been factors in the decrease.

The last report showed nearly two-thirds of all commitments were for low grade feebleminded persons. This is again true, the figure of approximately 61% being slightly higher than that for the last biennium.

One type of commitment that has been increasing is that of the infant under two years of age—not only the ones physically very abnormal, but also the Mongolian. These commitments are made on the recommendation of the physician with the further recommendation that if possible the baby never be in the home. There were 67 such commitments in the past bi-

ennium, and if the trend continues it may have a definite bearing on future statistics and consequent plans.

Other statistics of interest are those showing the division between sexes, and the distribution between counties with large cities and those entirely rural. There were 363 males and 333 females, with the percentages of high and low grade running approximately the same in both sexes. There were 286 commitments from Hennepin, Ramsey and Saint Louis Counties and 410 from the other 84 counties. On the basis of the 1940 census figures, the three large counties contain about 39% of the population and the commitments constitute about 41% of the total. County figures were kept for the biennium 1936-38. At that time there was an almost exact ratio between census and commitment: approximately 39% of the population lived in the three counties and 39% of the commitments were made in them. The only significance to be attached to these figures would seem to be that the factors affecting the number of commitments function the same over the state as a whole, and that therefore the program for the feebleminded is really a state program functioning with equal understanding in the counties with large staffs and those with smaller staffs.

The pressure for space at Faribault was so great during the biennium of 1940-42 that every possible additional bed was added, and every arrangement possible made with counties for exchanging persons needing a minimum of physical care for those more difficult to care for. The consequence was that the figures for those entering and leaving during that period were higher than the present biennium.

Entering Faribault		Placed Out from Faribault	
1940-42	478	1940-42	815
1942-44	420	1942-44	243

In comparing the figures the difference between those leaving and the greater number entering is accounted for by death, transfer to other institutions and crowding in extra beds. The figures for the second year of the 1942-44 biennium are less than for the first, both for those entering and those leaving. In the previous biennium there were many more entering in its second year.

Entering		Placed out	
1940-41	201	158	
1941-42	277	157	
1942-43	243	160	
1943-44	177	86	

The figures indicate that to a large extent a saturation point, so far as removing custodial cases is concerned, was reached in the last year. Few other than stable high grade adults with sufficient training for self support were placed during that year. This latter group forms a small percentage

of the institution population and therefore the number removed was much lower than for the previous several years.

The figures at Cambridge are somewhat different. There is not the pressure for entrance at Cambridge as at Faribault. Indeed, entrance at Cambridge usually is possible immediately after commitment or within a few weeks or months if desired. Many persons enter hoping for improvement or for educational opportunities. There is no reason for holding many if they wish to leave because the institution cannot accomplish what they had hoped for. Others may leave because their seizures have been controlled to some extent at least.

Entering Cambridge		Placed from Cambridge	
1940-42 -----	153		66
1942-44 -----	183		246

During the biennial period of 1942-44 there has been an especial effort made to take all persons from the waiting list (W.L.) whose care at the time could possibly be considered satisfactory. Therefore the figure given below is really the number who should at this time be in the institution. Low grade children who can be cared for as long as conditions in the home do not change are counted as nonurgent custodial (NUC). All persons of moron intelligence, whether school children or adults capable of at least partial self-support, who are not in need of institutional care, are counted for outside supervision (O.S.).

The figures given below are for July 1, 1942, and July 1, 1944.

	W.L.	N.U.C.	O.S.
1942 -----	1485	193	1934
1944 -----	1085	243	2405

Few of those on the waiting list were epileptic and so the pressure for entrance at Faribault is evident. It is apparent that the waiting list was lessened by transferring to other classifications—and the probability of emergencies from these groups is great. Change in family situations or increased age and therefore a change in the care needed causes emergencies from the N.U.C. group while delinquency or maladjustment create emergencies for the morons of the O.S. group.

The waiting list is composed largely of the following groups:

1. Those requiring some physical care or direction. (This includes, roughly speaking, the imbeciles and idiots). Nearly two-thirds of those counted on the W.L. can be so classified. Certain groups—the hyperactive particularly—are only slightly advanced from two years ago in removal from the W.L. There are girls committed in 1934 and boys in 1935 still listed. The effect on family life is disastrous in many cases. Many of these are really emergencies sometimes due to the entrance of the fathers into the armed

- forces or conditions resulting from extra work necessitated by the war but leaving the parents with no possibility of help in the home.
2. Children needing the school training offered at the institution. For this group the W.L. only extends back four or five years. Most of the children come from communities where schooling is not possible or they have already shown tendencies making removal from the community advisable. The period of waiting for schooling gives time for anti-social habits to develop or increase.
 3. Males with bad sex habits—but not *yet* so serious as to warrant placement ahead of others.
 4. Older girls and boys—or men and women—who are delinquent or showing emotional instability but again not *yet* serious enough to warrant earlier placement. This group is likely to increase whenever employment opportunities are lessened.
 5. Some middle grade older persons who are not serious problems but are unkindly treated and for whom there is no place outside where they will be more than tolerated—and sometimes not even that.

The group counted for outside supervision is the one made up largely of those who have had schooling or training at the institution and who should if in the right environment become desirable citizens. This requires direction and supervision given by a person understanding their needs and capable of assisting in the adjustment. The high rate of employment of persons of moron mentality during the past biennium has lessened the need for close supervision in many cases as there has been both sufficient money for all need and time constructively occupied. A special group within this larger group is that composed of parents with children in the home. The study noted in the last report was continued, but it was impossible to bring it to the point of making any specific deductions and suggesting methods based on them. It is hoped that point will be reached within this coming biennium. The supervision of the moron is a real challenge, but the welfare boards need more help from the bureau in aiding them to understand the feeble-minded if they are to have a high percentage of success in long time satisfactory adjustments. Many of the W.L. should also be given the same type of understanding supervision if they must remain in the community. The manual for welfare boards was rewritten during the past two years and is more helpful but does not lessen the need for personal contacts which are impossible to any great extent with only one social worker in addition to the head of the bureau.

During the biennial period 58 persons were discharged from guardian

ship. This is by court action. With possibly four exceptions these were either by petition of the Director or agreement that the petition by or for the ward would not be contested. It is hoped during the coming biennium there will be sufficient time—both that of clerical and social workers—to prepare many more cases for petition to the court, as there are others no longer in need of state guardianship, as well as some requiring further study to determine if perhaps at this time they really are not feeble-minded. In the case of children, where there may be doubt as to the possibility of some remedial defect—physical or emotional—the guardianship department of the Division of Social Welfare cooperates with this bureau and the county responsible for care by giving supervision in the Twin Cities, where there can be special service to determine whether commitment is correctly made. They have assumed responsibility for three during the past period.

The recommendations of the previous report still hold. The most important of these at this time are:

1. More space.
2. Initiation of a study by trained persons to determine whether the guardianship law should be drastically changed now that it has been in force for 25 years. This would also give an indication of what groups might be considered defective delinquents and the amount and type of institutional space needed.
3. *At least two* additional social workers with corresponding provision for clerical work. The need for greater direction of county workers even under existing conditions has been indicated. It seems probable that during this coming period employment opportunities may be lessened. The feeble-minded in the past have been among the first to lose jobs. This will increase the need for skillful county planning if the pressure for institutional care for higher grade persons is not to be greatly increased. The county workers will need help in making these plans.

The cooperation of probate judges and county welfare boards as well as that of the Division of Social Welfare has been necessary to make possible as much success as has been attained in planning for the feeble-minded. This latter has been given by members of the field staff who act as liaison personnel between this office and the welfare boards, and also by those in the Social Services Unit. Furthermore, the work of this bureau is closely tied to and dependent upon that of the two institutions for the feeble-minded and epileptic and the Bureau for Psychological Services within the Division

of Public Institutions. It is hoped this continued close cooperation will continue to make possible more understanding of and better planning for the feeble-minded and epileptic.

Respectfully submitted,

MILDRED THOMSON

Head, Bureau for Feeble-minded & Epileptic

Tuberculosis Control Unit

To the Director of the Division of Public Institutions:

I am submitting to you the biennial report for the Tuberculosis Control Unit for the period ended June 30, 1944.

The Tuberculosis Control Unit in the Division of Public Institutions was established on a full time basis November 17, 1942. In the fall of 1934 the State Board of Control authorized a survey of all institutions under its jurisdiction to determine the incidence of tuberculosis infection and tuberculosis disease among the inmate population. Recommendations were to be submitted to the Board of Control for its further action following the completion of this investigation with follow-up to be continued as considered practical from this time on. Following the survey the control work in the institutions was not carried on continuously under the direction of the Division itself.

When taking over the work by the Division in November, 1942, there were no records available concerning cases. For several years such data had accumulated on a part time basis and was not accessible. When the work was finally taken over by the Division of Public Institutions, it became necessary at once to determine the tuberculosis problem as it affects the state institutions. It was necessary to obtain more definite knowledge concerning the case load before any serious planning could be initiated to plan further relative to isolation facilities.

Since November 17, 1942, x-ray plates of each patient have been taken on admission and annually thereafter except in certain cases where evidence of disease of the lungs has been found on x-ray. Such cases are grouped for more frequent examinations to determine whether they are suffering from quiescent tuberculosis or whether they might be progressive open cases endangering their associates. In all such questionable cases, x-rays are repeated at three month intervals or oftener if so directed. Sputum examinations (gastric lavage) are made in all cases that show any signs of lung change on the x-ray plate. Such examinations may be at one or three month intervals.

Because of the lack of data in the beginning of this work, it was necessary to review the x-ray files of more than 14,000 inmates and to record all data found on such plates for further reference. This became the basis for the later working out of plans for Tuberculosis Control in the institutions. Additional information was added as later x-ray plates were read and sputum examinations were reported upon. New cards were made out as later admissions showed evidence of lung disease. Such cases were added