

May 31, 1949

Edward L. Johnstone
Superintendent
Woodbine State Colony
Woodbine, N.J.

Dear Mr. Johnstone:

We are in the process of making some changes in our institutional program as a result of new standards that have been declared by our legislature for the care and treatment of patients in the group of mental hospitals, which includes this institution together with the hospitals for the mentally ill, the Hospital for epileptics, and the State School at Owatonna, which gives training to the educable feeble-minded of school years. The Owatonna institution had been one for dependent and neglected children of normal intelligence, with a capacity of about 400, and which in 1945 was converted to serve its present purpose, and at which time we transferred all of our children of moron and borderline intelligence, and following which date that type of children have ordinarily gone directly to Owatonna upon commitment. This institution, having I.Q.s of less than 50%, those transferred from Owatonna who have completed their training but for whom plans for return to the community either have not been completed or should not at one time be made. (This transfer is made usually between 17 and 21 years of age), and those older patients of all degrees of mental deficiency requiring institutional care and treatment. In addition we have a very few children of school years of I.Q.s in excess of 50 who can not be accepted at Owatonna because of some physical handicap rendering it impossible for them to go to the various class rooms, dining rooms, etc., certain severely maladjusted individuals who are sent here for observation to determine whether they should be tried at Owatonna, and certain ones presenting special diagnostic problems which should be cleared in order to determine what their future program should be. Included in our population is a group of about 150 males and the same number of females, ranging in age from a few months to six or seven years of age.

I am giving you this description of our institution in order that you may understand the problems that we are going to have in putting into effect the new program which provides for a number of occupational therapists and recreational workers, in addition to our staff of handicraft teachers, teachers of music, etc., two teachers engaged in essentially sense training work, and one having the responsibility of occupational and manual instruction to those with the handicaps described and of the moron or borderline level of intelligence.

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I know of the splendid work that you are doing with patients of very limited intelligence, and for that reason believe you would be in a position to give me some very definite help in our problem, and for which I shall be very grateful.

It appears to me that our most effective program would be to add the recreational workers and occupational therapists to our School Department, but I am wondering whether we are likely to run into any difficulty because of professional jealousy between the occupational therapists, recreational workers, the principal of the School Department, and the various teachers. If you will be good enough to let me know what your administrative set-up is for these activities it may be helpful to us in working out our program. It seems to me reasonable to take the position in our institution that our total program except for the distinctly medical aspects of it are all properly functions of education, using that term in the broad sense, and for that reason could be set up in the manner described under the principal of the School Department, having of course a close correlation with the medical staff, and especially so in the case of certain crippled patients where the occupational therapy activities would have to have medical direction.

I realize that I am asking a very real favor of you in this letter, but hope that you will be good enough to give me the time that is necessary to reply.

Sincerely yours,

E. J. Engberg, M.D.
Superintendent