

MINNESOTA SCHOOL AND COLONY
1879 1951

This Institution has functioned since 1879 as a home and training school for persons of all ages who are handicapped by mental deficiency. It is under the direction of the state Division of Public Institutions, and only those are accepted from a waiting list who have been previously committed as mentally deficient in probate court in the county of residence. Commitment is to the guardianship of the Director of Public Institutions, and the ward may be in the community or at the Institution, depending upon need and whether there is space.

The Campus, consisting of 1183 acres, is attractively situated on a bluff overlooking the city of Faribault, and is surrounded on three sides by the wooded banks of the Straight River. Housing is provided for the patients in about thirty large cottages, as well as three buildings of the linear type. The administration unit includes a wing for the school department and assembly hall. Other facilities are: a modern hospital, laundry, central kitchen and bakery, pasteurization plant, power plant, shops, green house, dairy, farm, garden area, staff residences, and various maintenance buildings. The estimated annual per capita cost is about \$750.

In the process of completion are two new residences for physicians, the enlargement and remodeling of the kitchen facilities, and the construction of three new dormitories by 1952. By then accommodations will be provided for at least 300 from the waiting list, although the present population of 2870 means that there is serious over-crowding, so that a hundred or more patients should be moved into these new buildings. They will be of the geriatric type, in order to provide care for the older and physically handicapped patients who are unable to climb stairs.

The inclusion of the Institution in the Mental Health Program has resulted in many benefits. Positions have been authorized for a staff of nine physicians, of which five, including a pediatrician, have been filled. The services of consultants in specialized fields are available to assist the medical staff. A full time psychologist and an intern in psychology have been added. The Chaplain, who is in charge of all religious services, came in September, 1950. Eight recreation workers under a recreation leader have organized a program of activities and entertainment which reaches even the wards where patients are too physically or mentally handicapped to attend the assembly hall events. The most recent addition is a personnel officer who assists the business manager in recruiting employees, making assignments, and handling personnel relations.

The Social Service Department has been increased from one to four positions, of which three are filled. A male social worker is in charge of the assignment of patient helpers to institutional work-training detail, such as hospital maid service, waiting on table, general housework, laundry and food service for the women, and work in the central kitchen, shops, laundry, dairy, and on the farm for the men. The other two social workers handle all interviews and correspondence pertaining to patients and their families.

The Institution maintains a commissary store where any patients who have personal accounts may purchase treats and inexpensive luxuries. Each patient-helper receives a small monthly allowance, which he may spend in this store.

The school department has a three-fold purpose. First, to provide nursery school and kindergarten training for children who, even though they may make little academic progress, may be helped to make a good adjustment in the Institution and on vacations. Second, to provide special tutoring in ungraded rooms for older children who have double handicaps, such as crippled conditions, emotional and behavior difficulties, which preclude their placement elsewhere. Occasionally one of these cases, after a period of training and psychological study here, may be recommended for transfer to the Owatonna State School, where the educable mentally deficient of school age are accepted. Third, to provide sewing, handicraft, and industrial classes for both instructional purposes and occupational therapies. A music teacher directs choirs, produces operettas, and conducts group singing. A welcome addition has been a new school principal to head the staff of twelve teachers. The librarian not only has regular library periods in a very attractive school library, but also visits the hospital and the infirmaries to provide reading material and story hours for the shut-ins.

All employees are under Civil Service, and are required to pass specialized examinations. A nurse instructor has organized an 80-hour in-service training course which all psychiatric aides must attend. Other Institution employees participate in a portion of this program, as a means of orientation to their respective jobs. In January, 1951 the total number of employees was 560. About 330 of these are nurses and psychiatric aides. Twenty-eight more positions have been made available as of June 30, 1951.

The constant objective of the Minnesota School and Colony is to provide a favorable environment for the development of all patients to the limit of their physical and mental capacities, and at the same time to make them as happily adjusted as possible. In order to attain this end an individualized approach is employed by studying each new patient and putting into effect a recommended program for him.