

Mental Retardation In Minnesota

**Goals for public action in
1963, recommended by the
Minnesota Association for
Retarded Children**

The mentally retarded form about three per cent of our population. This means that in Minnesota there are over 100,000 retarded children and adults whose mental ability is below normal and who therefore are handicapped in adjusting to and meeting the demands of our society.

Although Minnesota generally has been a leader in providing care for the mentally retarded, due to a lack of public interest the level of care provided by our institutions has stopped progressing and now is actually declining. And although many mentally retarded can benefit from special classes, vocational training, and other community programs, few of these services and facilities have been provided.

The right to an education; the opportunity to develop intellectual, social, and vocational abilities — these are birthrights of every American and should not be denied individuals because of differences in intellectual potential.

On the following pages are listed proposals for public action recommended by the Minnesota Association for Retarded Children. These proposals must be implemented if the mentally retarded in Minnesota are to receive the help they so urgently need.

INSTITUTIONS

Minnesota has four residential care facilities for the mentally retarded—the Brainerd, Cambridge, and Faribault State Schools and Hospitals and the Owatonna State School. The population of these institutions is approximately 6,400 and there is a waiting list of about 700.

Minnesota's institutional program has evolved from the concept which held that the institutions' major purpose was to provide life-long care for the retarded. Emphasis was on care; the opportunities to develop greater independence and usefulness through educational, vocational, and other training were restricted to a select few.

We know that all the mentally retarded can benefit from specialized training and/or more individual attention, but insufficient staff and inadequate facilities limit Minnesota's institutions largely to a basic care program. And even this care program has fallen below national standards. Progressive programs emphasize training and treatment as well as care.

The Association's recommendations for institutions fall into two categories: staff and physical facilities.

STAFF

The Minnesota Association for Retarded Children recommends:

- that as a vitally necessary step towards bringing the basic care program of the three major institutions for the mentally retarded up to an adequate level, each of them be authorized enough additional positions to bring its over-all staff-patient ratio to the U.S. average of 1:3.2. This will require 281 new positions at Faribault, 76 at Cambridge, and 73 at Brainerd.

- that Minnesota go beyond a basic care program, and support, to the fullest extent possible, additional staff increases to meet the training and treatment needs of all the patients.
- that the Owatonna State School be authorized 33 new positions in 1963.
- that 15 additional positions be granted to the Cambridge State School and Hospital for its experimental intensive treatment unit.

PHYSICAL PLANT

The Association recommends:

- that top priority consideration be given to the construction of a new Food Service and Handling Building at the Faribault State School and Hospital. The present facility, responsible for the preparation of more than 10,000 meals a day, was described by one food service expert as the "most outmoded, unsanitary, and inefficient facility" he had ever visited.
- that two additional dormitories be authorized for the Faribault State School and Hospital to replace buildings which are old, out-of-date, and inadequate.
- that the School and Rehabilitation Therapies Building at the Brainerd State School and Hospital, essential to the training and treatment program of that institution, be authorized by the 1963 legislature.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Almost 95 per cent of Minnesota's mentally retarded live in their home communities. This is desirable, but only if the community provides special classes, day activity centers, workshops, and other special programs which the retarded need.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Although the number of Minnesota school districts offering special classes for the retarded has increased steadily during the past five years, over 75 per cent of the mentally retarded who could benefit from these classes are not being served. The problem is particularly acute in small towns and rural areas. Limitation of funds and shortage of trained teachers hamper development of special classes. To increase educational opportunities for the retarded, the Association recommends:

- that the Department of Education be authorized to employ four additional consultants in special education. These consultants should be placed in outlying communities of the state and be given regional responsibilities to assist in the development and supervision of school programs for handicapped children (including the retarded) in small school districts.
- that present statutes limiting state reimbursements for special teachers and other special education personnel be amended to provide state reimbursements at a level of two-thirds salary without limitations.
- that appropriation requests of the several state colleges and the University of Minnesota, as they pertain to training programs for teachers of the mentally retarded, be given favorable consideration.
- that the Division of Special Education and Rehabilitation of the State Department of Education be given the authority and funds to employ a special consultant who has professional background in both special education and rehabilitation fields to provide leadership in the development of school-work programs for retarded youth.

DAY ACTIVITY CENTERS

Day activity centers provide an essential service. They serve pre-school and post-school age retarded and those of school age who cannot profit from regular school programs. They are centers for parent education and counseling and for long-range planning for retarded persons.

The Association recommends:

- that appropriations for state matching funds for day activity centers be increased to \$215,000 for the 1963-65 biennium, and that an enabling law be adopted to include the following:
 - (a) Advance payments rather than reimbursements by the state for expenses in operating day activity centers.
 - (b) The Department of Public Welfare should be given the authority and funds to employ a special consultant to day activity centers.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Most mentally retarded persons, if given adequate training and guidance, can do simple jobs in competitive industry or make useful economic contributions in sheltered environments. To strengthen the development of these programs, the Association recommends:

- that the staff of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation be increased substantially so that more services can be provided for the mentally retarded.
- that the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation prepare a plan and specific proposal for development and partial support of community sheltered workshops by the state through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. It is appropriate that the development of such facilities be a cooperative venture by state and local agencies. State support should include grants for a period of initial development and operation of approved facilities, plus continuing aid through "Fees for Service" provided to mentally retarded individuals.

BOARDING CARE AND OTHER SERVICES

Many mentally retarded do not need institutional care, but do need supervision and care outside of the home. To help increase the number of boarding care homes and other facilities for the retarded, the Association recommends:

- that approval be given to the Department of Public Welfare recommendation that the state reimburse counties up to 50 per cent of boarding care costs for mentally retarded wards of the State Commissioner of Public Welfare. Presently, there is no state aid for this type of care.

- that approval be given to the Department of Public Welfare request for funds to initiate a demonstration project on sheltered living facilities in the community for older retarded persons.

9 that approval be given to the Department of Health recommendation that state aid for public health nurses be increased from \$1,500 to \$3,000 in order to encourage public health nursing services in all parts of the state.

RESEARCH

Although research holds the ultimate solution to mental retardation, Minnesota annually invests in research only a tiny fraction of one per cent of the total cost of mental retardation.

The Association recommends:

- that all receipts from charges to individuals, guardians, and relatives of the mentally retarded be dedicated to a research and development fund. Income from this source alone would increase present research funds by 12 times.

LONG-RANGE PLANS

Finally, the Association recommends:

- that the legislature formally recognize the magnitude of the problem of mental retardation and adopt a long-range program of training, treatment, and care for the mentally retarded.
- that a long-life, ongoing legislative interim commission and/or a governor's advisory committee be established to study and make recommendations concerning programs for the mentally retarded.

THE MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION FOR RETARDED CHILDREN

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