

TO: All Institutions
Attention: Medical Directors
Administrators
Nursing Services
Social Services

February 17, 1965

Mental Health Executive Council

Committee on Humane Practices

DFW Cabinet

FROM: David J. Vail, M. D.
Medical Director

SUBJECT: Censorship

I have given thought to the problems of censorship of incoming and outgoing mail. I suggest the following approach:

1. This memo applies only to hospitals for the mentally ill. The entire matter is referred to Dr. Bartman and his group for study as regards the mentally retarded. (I do this reluctantly as I am not really convinced that the problems are all that different.)
2. This memo applies for the time being only to letters, magazines, etc.
3. Basic principle: Henceforth there should be no censorship of mail coming into or going out of the institutions.

Qualifying conditions:

3.1 Incoming mail

Where ward personnel feel that an individual patient is receiving funds which should be deposited in the business office, or some other article which it would not be of advantage to the patient for him to have, then the incoming mail should be checked when the patient opens it.

3.2 Outgoing mail

Outgoing mail will be censored by ward personnel only if they feel that the patient's condition is such that the patient would regret sending the letter at some later date. The letter should not be destroyed, but should be returned to the patient when the patient is able to understand the implications of the letter.

4. The problem of packages is more complicated. This will be referred to the Committee on Humane Practices for study and recommendations.
5. Effective immediately.

DJV:rcj