

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE REASONS FOR NOT
HAVING A DIVISION ON MENTAL RETARDATION

1. A Section could do anything a Division could do.

Answer: The program for the retarded must be headed by a person of high ability, authority and status to enable him to deal at an eye-to-eye level with other Divisions and people in other state departments. Salary, status, responsibility and authority are key factors in attracting and holding the right person.

2. There would be duplication of present positions in the Medical Division.

Answer: The present meager staff of the Medical Division is unable to spread itself enough to give service to the mentally ill and also the retarded. This the staff people readily admit. In spite of this, the Department is not asking the Legislature for additional consultants.

3. The relationship of mental illness and mental retardation is close enough that they should be in the same Division.

Answer: Divisions within the Department of Public Welfare do and should work closely. It should be as easy for the Divisions to work together as it would be for Sections in a Division. The present system has not resulted in rapid or adequate improvement of services to the mentally retarded.

4. Some positions, such as research coordinator, are not needed in each Division.

Answer: True. Perhaps one research coordinator for the entire Department would be adequate. We are proposing a separate Division not a separate Department.

5. There are a number of joint projects such as Cambridge-Moose Lake, Mental Health Centers, etc.

Answer: Coordination of these projects could be enhanced with good mental retardation staff to work with mental illness staff. Removal of mental retardation responsibilities from the Medical Services Division could improve services to the mentally ill.

6. It would be difficult to employ staff.

Answer: It is difficult in all fields. It would probably be easier to employ mental retardation specialists than dual specialists.

7. A separate Division would decrease efforts in the mental retardation field within other Divisions, most specifically in the Child Welfare Division.

Answer: It shouldn't. Such efforts should not be based on personal interests or gratifications but on organization, assignment of duties, training and department direction.

8. We are making progress now. This would delay further progress.

Answer: Progress has been painfully slow. In some ways, we may have even moved backwards. In 1959, with limited staff, there was better Department coordination, agency cooperation and involvement.