

67-OPM-MRR

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STATE OF MINNESOTA

DEPARTMENT Public Welfare

## Office Memorandum

TO : Medical Director  
Faribault State Hospital

DATE: 10/3/67

FROM : R. Joseph Lucero  
Research Coordinator

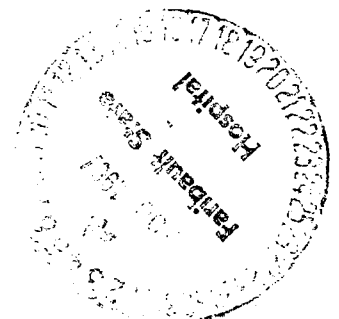
SUBJECT: Fergus Falls "Opinion Poll on Mental Retardation"

Attached is a copy of the results of an "Opinion Poll on Mental Retardation" taken by M. R. Ravensborg at Fergus Falls State Hospital.

41% of the Fergus Falls respondents objected to working with the mentally retarded. At St. Peter 28% objected, and at Hastings only 14% had objections.

RJL/bjk

cc: LJC  
Madon



## Opinion Poll on Mental Retardation

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Fergus Falls, Minnesota State Hospital

In line with recent plans to transfer large groups of mentally retarded patients from hospitals for the retarded to psychiatric hospitals, surveys of the attitudes of psychiatric personnel toward working with the retarded have been conducted in several Minnesota state hospitals. The following report is based on the survey conducted at Fergus Falls State Hospital. Opinions of treatment staff were polled by means of a questionnaire devised by Dr. Robert Long at St. Peter State Hospital. The questionnaire was sent to 352 staff members and was returned by 310 (or 88%).

### Method

The first section of the questionnaire asked for the respondent's approximate number of years of experience. Responses in each category were summed and divided by the total number of questionnaires returned.

The second part of the questionnaire surveyed attitudes of respondents toward working with the mentally retarded as expressed in a 5-step scale. The frequency with which each response was chosen was divided by the total number of questionnaires returned.

The third part of the questionnaire asked whether the respondent had visited or worked in a mental retardation hospital or ward. Here again, the frequency checking "Yes" and "No" was divided by the total number of responses.

The fourth part of the questionnaire indicated that respondents who would like to be considered for work with the mentally retarded might sign their names on the blank below. The number of signatures was divided by the total of responses

to the questionnaire.

The joint frequency of responses to the question in Part III and responses to items on the attitude scale was tabulated and analyzed by means of chi-square and the contingency coefficient.

Lastly, the joint frequency of responses to the attitude scale and experience, based on a median split, was tabulated and analyzed by chi-square.

#### Results

As is evident in Table 1, the bulk of the respondents have six or more years of experience in the psychiatric setting.

With regard to attitudes of respondents toward working with the mentally retarded, 41% expressed objections to this type of nursing duty while only 3% state, "I would very much like to work with the mentally retarded."

41% of the Fergus Falls respondents have visited or worked in a mentally retarded hospital or ward, but 59% have not had such an experience.

Seventy-eight staff members (or 25%), by signing on the blank provided, showed their willingness to be considered for working with the mentally retarded.

As shown in Table 2, there was some tendency for people who had not visited a mentally retarded hospital to be more negative towards working with the retarded than those who had had such a visit. The chi-square test of independence was significant beyond the .05 level and the contingency coefficient of .31 suggested that there is a slight association between visiting the retarded hospital and feeling positive towards working with MR patients.

Experience seems to have nothing to do with attitudes towards working with the mentally retarded. The chi-square test of independence did not achieve significance. It might be tentatively concluded that older employees are as favorable towards assuming responsibilities for care of the mentally retarded as are employees with less experience.

### Summary and Discussion

A general impression of the 310 responses to the Opinion Poll on Mental Retardation is that most of the staff at Fergus Falls State Hospital are, at present, either neutral or negative towards working with the retarded, but those personnel who have spent some time at a retarded institution tend to be slightly more favorable toward the prospect of caring for MR patients.

The results of the St. Peter poll conducted by Dr. Long suggested a higher degree of favorability toward working with the retarded. At the same time, there exists a regular training program for St. Peter nursing personnel at Faribault State Hospital. To the best of our knowledge, none of the Fergus Falls treatment staff has spent more than a few days at any retarded institution. Therefore, one could expect lack of preparedness for working with MR patients and a somewhat negative feeling toward the prospect of accepting a large contingent of retarded patients from Cambridge State Hospital.

It would seem feasible and advantageous to arrange for training programs for Fergus Falls nursing personnel--and professional staff--at Brainerd State Hospital which is only two hours away.

# Table I

## QUESTIONNAIRE - Summary

(N = 310 ; 88% returns)

Please check on one of the blanks below your approximate number of years of experience.

8% Up to 1 year  
17% 1 -- 5 years  
22% 6 -- 10 years  
26% 11 -- 15 years  
27% 16 years or more.

If you wish, and if you feel it will not identify you, you can enter on the following blank, your exact number of years of hospital employment       .

Assuming that there will be a prior orientation and training program for work with the mentally retarded, on the blanks below please check the one blank which best expresses your degree of interest in being assigned to work with the mentally retarded. Even though you don't work directly with patients, answer from the point of view that you have some contact with patients, as most employees do.

12% I strongly object working with the mentally retarded.  
27% At present, I object to working with the mentally retarded.  
29% I might consider working with the mentally retarded.  
27% I would not be opposed to working with the mentally retarded.  
3% I would very much like to work with the mentally retarded.

Have you ever visited or worked in a mental retardation hospital or ward?

YES 41%

NO 59%

If you would like to be considered for work with the mentally retarded, you may sign your name on the blank below. However, signing your name does not mean that you will be selected or that you will not be selected if you do not sign your name. (No one is required to sign his or her name if he does not care to).

78 Signatures, or 25%  
 (Signature only, please, no printing)

Table 2

Comparison of Attitudes Toward Working  
With the Mentally Retarded for Staff  
Who Had and Had Not Visited an MR Hospital

Attitude Statement<sup>a</sup>

		Strongly Object	At Present Object	Might Consider	Not Opposed	Much Like	Total
Visited MR Hospital	Yes	17	28	38	37	7	127
	No	19	63	54	45	2	183
	Total	36	91	92	82	9	310

Note.—<sup>a</sup> Key words excerpted from the five statements contained in the "Questionnaire" scale.

<sup>b</sup>  $\chi^2 = 10.11$ ;  $p < .05$

<sup>c</sup> Contingency coeff.:  $C = .31$

Table 3

Comparison of Attitudes of More Experienced  
and Less Experienced Staff  
Toward Working With the Mentally Retarded

Attitude Statement<sup>a</sup>

	Strongly Object	At Present Object	Might Consider	Not Opposed	Much Like	Total
Experience 11 years and over	23	46	48	45	2	164
Less than 11 years	13	45	43	38	7	146
Total	36	91	91	83	9	310

Note.--<sup>a</sup> Key words excerpted from the five statements contained in the  
"Questionnaire" scale.

<sup>b</sup>  $\chi^2 = 5.40$ ;  $.10 < p < .90$