

June 22, 1951

Sister M. Virginia Claire  
263 West 11th Street  
Eugene, Oregon

Dear Sister:

I would be most happy and willing to help you in any way that I can with your thesis for your doctorate; and will attempt to answer your questions as fully and as fairly as possible.

There is no organization of parents directly connected with the Institution. There was, however, a group established last fall - which now has, I believe, affiliation with the national parents' group. This is the "Vermont Association of Parents and Friends of Mentally Retarded Children". The parents of this group are striving to find some means of care and training for their mentally retarded children outside an institution. They would prefer to establish nurseries or day schools, and training centers of their own. And they feel that by bringing the problem into the open and attacking it objectively, they may be able to arouse the general interest of the public to the problems they are confronted with; and thus bring eventual good for the mentally retarded. Perhaps this group would be better qualified and more actively interested in completing the questionnaires you enclosed. If you would care to write Mrs. Emerico Nemes, the Secretary of this group, at 1432 Williston Road, Burlington, Vt., I am sure she would be most willing to cooperate in this project.

I might further suggest that if you wished to make a comparison of questionnaires completed by those parents whose children have never been institutionalized, and those whose children have or are presently institutionalized, I would gladly complete a few questionnaires from our records or have our social worker contact several of the families personally.

Our children are, for the most part, Probate Court commitments and, according to law, they can be accepted between the ages of 5 and 21. Children under 5, but over 3, can be admitted only by special written permission of the Board of Health. If over 21, their only means of commitment is by transfer from another State institution. May I further explain that commitment



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does not terminate at age 21, and, as a matter of fact, over 75 per cent of our present population is considered as custodial.

Our latest figure on actual population is 470; and we presently have a 555 bed institution. We also have 20 boys and girls on conditional discharge; and 26 girls at a Colony Home.

When I took over as the Superintendent in June of 1947 there was a waiting list of well over 250 names (most of whom had been there over a period of many years). At present there are 19 boys and 8 girls on our lists for admission - and we have adequate facilities for their care as soon as probate court commitments are completed.

If the parents need or desire care for their child while they are awaiting the commitment, the State Social Welfare Department handles the situation for them - providing foster homes; paying medical expenses; accomplishing psychiatric examinations; advising and instructing the parents in the proper care of the child; helping with commitment procedures, etc.

To answer question No. 4, I enclose a mimeographed sheet which is given the parents if they so desire. Also enclosed are several booklets which are provided. Generally the parents visit the Institution prior to the commitment and at that time the purpose, policies, and procedures of the School are explained in detail to them by the Superintendent or the social worker.

Our Institution presently has a form of parole - our so-called "Conditional Discharge" program - whereby the higher grade, socially acceptable children are placed out to work in private homes (the girls as domestics and the boys as farm workers) for a small salary, plus their room and board. The primary aim of this program is, of course, to give the children an opportunity - by re-education and training, and acceptance in a family unit - to re-adjust to society. Under such circumstances, adequate homes are hard to find - but we presently have 20 children placed.

We also have a "Colony House" in the City of Rutland, housing 26 girls who work by the day in private homes in Rutland. Because the Colony House is a branch of this Institution - to be supported at State expense, one-half these girls' salaries goes to the State Treasurer for the maintaining of the Colony.

I am enclosing a copy of our conditional discharge agreement which is signed by both the employer and the Superintendent.

In the case of a child returned to his own family - a complete or final discharge is not necessarily granted. This child, too, may be placed on conditional discharge until it is determined whether or not an adequate social adjustment will be made.



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The follow-up work on these discharges is done by our social worker; but all discharges both conditional or complete are the decision of the Board of Health.

The State Vocational Rehabilitation Department handles physically - rather than mentally - handicapped individuals. Therefore, we have, actually, little contact with them.

I hope that, in some small way, my answer will be helpful to you in completing your thesis. And be assured that I will gladly cooperate further in any way I can.

Sincerely yours,

Francis W. Kelly, M.D.  
Superintendent

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Encs.