

M I N U T E S

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON INSTITUTIONS

July 8-9, 1976

Members Present

Senator Arden Booth, Chairman
Representative R. C. Zajic, Vice-Chairman
Senator Bud Burke
Senator Bert Chaney
Representative Eugene Anderson
Representative Glee Jones (First Day)
Representative Ardena Matlack
Representative Rip Reeves
Representative James Ungerer
Representative Billie Joe Wisdom

Staff Present

John Schott, Legislative Research Department
Carl Tramel, Legislative Research Department
Norman Furse, Revisor of Statute's Office
Bill Edds, Revisor of Statute's Office
Sherman Parks, Jr., Revisor of Statute's Office
Jim Hays, Division of Budget, Department of Administration

Area Legislators

Representative Ruth Wilkin (July 8)

July 8, 1976

Youth Center at Topeka

Chairman Booth opened the meeting by introducing the members and staff of the Special Committee on Institutions. He then introduced Representative Ruth Wilkin, the state representative from Topeka in whose district the youth center is located.

Following several introductory remarks, Senator Booth turned the meeting over to Mr. Lawrence Penney, Superintendent of the Youth Center at Topeka. Mr. Penney explained that YCT has a bed capacity of 198 boys and currently there are 191 individuals at the institution. The center has opened, semi-opened and closed cottages, reflecting the varying levels and degrees of supervision and responsibility accorded the boys as they progress in the program at YCT.

In a general discussion of the operation of the Youth Center, Mr. Penney brought to the attention of the Committee that during the past six months there has been a dramatic increase in admissions to this institution. He explained to the Committee that a releasing policy has had to be implemented in order to accommodate the increasing number of admissions. That policy makes any individual eligible for release after spending at least one year at YTC. However, individuals who are placed at the institution as a result of serious offenses, including murder, rape, aggravated burglary, etc., are excluded from the policy and are required to complete the program at the Center.

Mr. Penney noted that the individuals who are now being admitted to YCT have committed serious crimes and are far more aggressive than individuals in the past. Under questioning by the Committee, Mr. Penney admitted that the institution, due to the increase in admissions, has been and will be releasing boys who are not ready to readjust to life outside the institution.

In response to a question from the Committee, Mr. Penney noted that there is poor communication between the Youth Center at Topeka and local youth service officials. Although a program is being developed which will hopefully strengthen the ties between the Center and community officials, aftercare for individuals released from this institution is such that it is possible for an individual to "fall through the cracks" and drop out of the system of continued and extended care.

In response to a question concerning the population at the Youth Center, Mr. Penney explained that approximately 60% of the YCT population comes from Wyandotte, Sedgwick, Shawnee and Johnson counties. In referring to statistics which he has maintained on individuals entering and leaving the institution, Mr. Penney told the Committee that a large percentage of the Center population are from homes where the parents are divorced or one parent is deceased.

Mr. Penney then introduced Dr. Carlos Estrada, child psychiatrist at the Youth Center of Topeka. In reference to the clinical staff, Dr. Estrada explained that the institution will be losing the other child psychiatrist later this month and that six psychologists are currently on the staff.

In reviewing the clinical operations of YCT, Dr. Estrada pointed out that the average stay of an individual at the institution is approximately 12 months. During the first month there is an evaluation of the needs, the assets and the total personality makeup of the individual, and what specific goals and type of program need to be established for the individual.

The treatment process at YCT involves group and individual therapy, community counseling and family therapy. Dr. Estrada pointed out to the Committee that the students at YCT generally come with emotional and personal problems, are admitted to the center after community-based facilities have failed to treat these individuals, and have problems and needs which contribute to the performance of unsocial acts. YCT provides temporary isolation for the individual from the problem environment, provides 24-hour control and supervision, and is a highly coordinated, professional program of rendering service to the individual through a structured management system.

Following Dr. Estrada's presentation, Dr. Robert Haines, Director, Division of Mental Health and Rehabilitation Services, Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, appeared before the Committee to discuss certain materials which were being mailed to an individual at the Youth Center at Topeka. The Committee took no official action on this matter.

The Committee then adjourned for lunch and a tour of the Institution.

Afternoon Session

Following the tour of the Youth Center at Topeka, the Committee reconvened and began a discussion of some of the basic needs of the institution as perceived by the staff. Dr. Estrada felt that one of these needs was further and more extensive in-service training for cottage parents at the Youth Center. It was pointed out to the Committee that while the turnover rate in cottage parents has been moderate, the rate is beginning to rise again.

In response to a question from the Committee, Mr. Penney related that there is no extensive program to utilize volunteers at the Youth Center. Previous experience has indicated that volunteers needed to be closely supervised. The YCT experience with volunteers has been "mixed". In reference to institutional activities, it was pointed out that staff-student fishing trips have been curtailed since the Forestry, Fish and Game Commission requires each individual to hold a valid fishing license.

In assessing the personnel situation at the Youth Center, Mr. Penney expressed the position that staff morale is good although there are some problems. The treatment program is currently being overhauled and more difficult individuals are entering the system. These two factors create an uncertain staff environment which has a undefined negative effect upon morale.

Another problem was noted in the cottage parent category, where there is no advancement potential for cottage parents once they have obtained their highest classification. An additional personnel problem is the lack of flexibility in the institution. Mr. Penney explained that YCT is locked in on some personnel which he feels the institution would be better off without.

Following limited further discussion, the Committee thanked Mr. Penney and the YCT staff and adjourned until 9:00 a.m. the next day at the Topeka State Hospital.

July 9, 1976

Topeka State Hospital

Senator Booth called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. He introduced the members of the Committee and then turned the meeting over to Dr. Walter Menninger, Clinical Director, Topeka State Hospital.

Dr. Menninger began his presentation by introducing various members of his staff. He brought to the Committee's attention the notebooks which had been specifically prepared for the Committee to help them in understanding the mission and goals of TSH. (Copies of these materials are available for review in the Legislative Research Department.)

Dr. Menninger then gave a brief overview of Topeka State Hospital, assessed the general impact of 1976 Senate Bill No. 26 and covered other general matters concerning the hospital, including the Americana Festival Program in celebration of the bicentennial.

Following these remarks, Dr. Menninger turned the meeting over to various members of his staff to discuss new developments at Topeka State Hospital. A report was given to the Committee on the centralizing of the admission function at TSH and on plans for the development of a new administrative structure whereby all non-clinical functions of hospital operations would be removed from the clinical staff. A general outline of activity therapy performed at Topeka State Hospital and the new requirements for continuing education for all clinical personnel was presented.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was explained the activity therapy volunteer program at Topeka State Hospital is an extensive and supervised program which is encouraged by the hospital staff. Their volunteer program has generally been successful. Activity therapy personnel explained that on staff-patient fishing trips, the Forestry, Fish and Game Commission allows patients to fish without a license so long as a staff member has a valid fishing license.

In response to questions concerning the continuing education program, it was explained that continuing education requirements for clinical staff are such that a formal process must be followed and rigid requirements met. Several members of the staff felt it would be necessary to go outside of Topeka State Hospital in order to receive appropriate continuing education.

Following a short break, the Committee turned its attention to certain special topics, including mental health technicians, services for children and the relationship between TSH and community mental health centers.

It was pointed out to the Committee that the mental health technician is the member of the treatment team who spends the greatest number of hours with a patient and has numerous time consuming duties. Despite these responsibilities, the licensed mental health technician has a low level of pay and no salary differential is provided for employees on the night shifts.

The childrens' services at Topeka State Hospital were briefly explained by Dr. Luna and members of his staff. Child services at TSH are for adolescent and pre-adolescent individuals generally from 6 to 14 years of age. Individuals participating in the program are not mentally retarded but are mentally ill. Every effort is made to include at least one parent in the treatment process and the average patient stays in the program for two years. Good staff coverage is emphasized in this program to insure appropriate control and direction for these children. In response to questions, Dr. Luna noted that there are three child psychiatrists on the staff of TSH for this particular unit and that generally the unit is full to capacity.

In a brief report on TSH and the community mental health centers, it was the position of the hospital staff that their operating relationship with the community mental health centers is generally quite good. It appears that efforts have been made by both TSH and the various centers to coordinate the various services they offer.

Following several additional questions, the Committee adjourned for lunch and a tour of the institution.

Afternoon Session

Following lunch and a tour of the institution, the Committee convened to conclude its visit to the Topeka State Hospital. Following several questions, Senator Booth thanked Dr. Menninger and the staff for their excellent presentation.

Representative Wisdom requested that a change be made in the June 15 and 16 Committee minutes concerning the testimony of Dr. Getz as it related to the hiring of competent physicians at Larned State Hospital. It was moved and seconded that the appropriate changes be made. Motion carried.

Senator Booth informed the Committee that the next meeting would be held at the Kansas State Penitentiary and the Kansas Correctional Institute for Women on August 5 and 6. The meetings on both days will begin at 10:00 a.m.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Prepared by John S. Schott

Approved by Committee on:

Aug. 6, 1976
Date