

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL STUDY COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AND REHABILITATIVE
INSTITUTIONS

Held in Room 522-S at the Statehouse, at 9:00 a.m., on March 28, 1980.

Members present were:

Senator Robert Talkington, Chairman
Representative Joe Hoagland, Vice Chairman
Senator Mike Johnston
Representative David Heinemann
Representative Phil Martin was excused

Staff present were:

Fred Carman, Revisor's Office
Emalene Correll, Legislative Research Department
Ray Hauke, Legislative Research Department
Robert A. Coldsnow, Legislative Counsel

The Chairman opened the meeting and stated the recommendations brought to the committee's attention with respect to transferring the Rainbow Mental Health Facility into the state hospital system was included in a bill which might be passed by the legislature this session.

A recommendation of a separate department of institutions was discussed. Although the Chairman had stated previously a move in this direction might be premature due, in part, to a new director of Mental Health and Retardation Services being employed, he felt this should be reflected in the committee report. Senator Johnston noted no evidence had come before the committee that having this separate department would improve the institutions. He moved that the committee recommend no action be taken on making the institutions into a separate department. Representative Hoagland seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Placing the youth centers under the Department of Corrections was brought up for discussion. Representative Hoagland said a decision on this issue should be based upon what decision was made regarding the Youth Rehabilitation Center programs. He proposed the committee make a recommendation acknowledging the YRC's were established as temporary, not ongoing, programs; they have created conflicts and tensions on hospital campuses; and the committee should recommend a desirable goal would be to remove the YRC's from hospital campuses by phasing out the program and either construct a new youth center in an appropriate geographical location based on need or consider turning the Osawatomie State Hospital into a youth center and phasing out the YRC programs at Topeka and Larned State Hospitals. He noted a large number of placements at YRC's and youth centers come from Wyandotte County, and Osawatomie has the geographical proximity for a youth center rather than a hospital. There are more YRC youths at Osawatomie now than mentally ill patients. He felt the possibility of the legislature appropriating funds for construction was remote, but there is a waiting list for youth to be admitted to youth centers with some being held in jails. A real need for 200-300 beds exists. The Chairman pointed out an attempt had been made several years ago to build a new facility for youth, but it had not materialized. He agreed there was a need to separate the YRC's from the hospitals, but he did not want to pin down a certain hospital to become a youth center. Mr. Hauke said, if Topeka State Hospital was used to combine all state YRC programs, its population now consists mostly of mentally ill children

under 21 years of age. Mr. Carman questioned what kind of talent was needed in staff to handle a new facility. He noted the staff at Osawatomie was better trained to phase in a program.

Representative Heinemann was concerned that western Kansas would have difficulty placing youths if the YRC was removed from Larned. By sending them farther away, it would change their environment and make visitation harder. If a facility was constructed, a decision would have to be made as to what type it should be and for what program. He questioned if it would be designed for sixteen and seventeen-year olds and the length of time they would be kept. The lack of program and facilities for seventeen to twenty-one-year olds was noted.

The point was made that the YRC's could not be phased out unless some provision was made for them. Youths in YRC programs need a different type program than those in youth centers, and perhaps two different type facilities were needed. Representative Hoagland pointed out the different types of youth located in the youth centers have been the source of a lot of problems for employees, especially at Atchison where some employees are geared to one type and some to another. He felt, because the state is bursting at the seams with juvenile offenders, the legislature has placed demands on the system which have caused stress.

An attempt in the past to establish state regional centers was discussed. The concept was abandoned because of lack of funds and the nationwide trend to work with community-based programs. Mr. Hauke pointed out, if community-based programs are used, a stipulation must be made that they have to take difficult youths. If they won't, the referring judge has no choice but to send them to a state operated youth center. The Chairman noted the trend is to shorten the stay of a youth in all institutions. If they are not being benefitted, they are moved out to make room for someone else. Mr. Coldsnow said there is some evidence of a suspicion by community youth residential institutions of the creditability of the state institutions in evaluations because of the pressure to transfer children to another facility; and, it was felt by some of these institutions they will only receive these children on a probationary basis so they can make their own evaluations.

Representative Hoagland said the committee had the option of noting in its report the need for additional bed space for juvenile offenders and recommending phasing out the YRC's from state hospitals with priority being given to a new institution or institutions, or making better use of existing facilities. Senator Johnston felt if additional beds were provided they would just be filled. Representative Hoagland questioned what was to be done with sixteen and seventeen-year olds and should they continue to be released just to come back as adults. The Chairman said community-based programs should continue to be explored and used for YRC youths, and youth centers be considered as a last resort. Representative Hoagland said the report could include a recommendation that a halfway house for youths seventeen to twenty-one utilizing the vocational institution at Salina be established. Since the Salina vocational institution is under the Board of Regents, such a program would need to be coordinated with the Board.

The Chairman summarized the discussion by saying the recommendation should include phasing out the YRC's and replacing them with construction of one or two new facilities; if that cannot be done, consideration be

given to phasing out one of the state hospitals for the mentally ill and using it exclusively for juveniles; the Department continue to explore and use community-based programs; and the Department explore the possibility of contracting with the Board of Regents for some kind of halfway house at the Salina vocational institution. Reservations were expressed by some members regarding the new facility recommendation, and no action was taken on these recommendations.

The Chairman suggested recommending in the report that the state in general and SRS in particular set up some program to employ people with as much administrative and management training as possible and to continue this training after employment. He noted the state needs employees who know how to handle program and funds. Representative Hoagland noted some people in the SRS agencies have not been promoted to their positions but have just fallen into them, but he did not know what the answer was. No action was taken.

There was discussion regarding the report to the Legislative Coordinating Council and the critical time span left to the committee. It was the consensus of opinion that a partial report and bill draft concerning the separation of the Atchison and Topeka youth centers be prepared and submitted to the LCC as soon as possible.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.


Chairman

ATTENDANCE SHEET

3-28-80

NAME

REPRESENTING

TOWN

Pat McKinley
Fowers

Sub Rakestraw