

# State commitment to retarded courts history of controversy

Community placement for the mentally handicapped is a program just completing its first decade in Michigan.

Conceived with the idea that the group home provides a more normal life than a large institution, and mandated by legislation and court order, it has made the state tops in the nation in its programs for the retarded.

It also has caused widespread controversy as implementers seek to foster community understanding.

"We're involved in a pioneering effort," was how David Rosen, nationally known expert in the field of retardation put it nearly two years ago as he worked toward development of Alternative Intermediate Service (AIS) group homes.

"This is really the first time any state has made this extensive a commitment to its severely retarded."

"Our goal is to bring mentally retarded citizens to their maximum level of capability."

Michigan's Mental Health Code, passed in 1974, set the stage for the group homes that bring the retarded out of institutions. Even earlier, in 1971, establishment of the Macomb-Oakland Center began to put into practice the idea that the retarded could do well in decentralized locations.

And still earlier there was legislation mandating special education for re-

arded persons up to age 25. That served to reduce the number of institutionally handicapped remained with their families.

KENNETH STOCKTON, community relations director for the state Department of Mental Health, said in 1970 the Michigan counted 11,775 developmentally disabled in institutions.

"Now that figure is less than 5,000," he stated.

Group homes started becoming reality through efforts of organizations like Community Opportunities centers, which established a home for 16 retarded in Plymouth in 1973 and opened one in Livonia last year. Private homes also were established in the last decade.

But the move toward had its big push when U.S. District Court Judge Charles Joiner, in an August, 1979 directive, ordered the Plymouth Center for Human

Development to moved 500 of its 600 retarded residents into group homes by 1983.

In 1977 came laws regarding zoning regulations for group homes for the retarded. Essentially, this meant that homes for six or less mentally-handicapped persons could be established in places zoned for single homes. The laws also set forth regulations, including the requirement for 24-hour supervision and separation of residential facilities by at least 1,500 feet.

Three kinds of group homes can be found within these suburban communities.

The COC-operated variety need at least 16 residents to be cost efficient. They are built with money borrowed through the Michigan State Housing and Development Authority. Residents selected for such homes pay rent, using money they get through state allocations or through community or sheltered workshop jobs.

Small group homes, also financed under the umbrella of the Department of Mental Health, involve an investor who buys a home, then leases it to a non-profit corporation. The state then gives the corporation money to pay for the lease and provide staff and programs.

AIS residences are for multiple-disabled persons who need 24-hour care. Although the name Alternate Intermediate Service implies that other living arrangements are down the road for them, many are likely to continue to need the full services only this type of residence can offer.

Rosen, commenting on the careful planning now going into the group home program, noted that "they need to be located in relation to the population."

"Ninety percent of the people want to do the right thing. It's a small minority which contributes opposition headlines."

## On dean's list

Beverly Ann Krolkowski, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Krolkowski of Farmington Hills, was named to the dean's list of St. Mary's College, Orchard Lake, for achieving over a 3.5 average in her studies.

Miss Krolkowski, a graduate of Farmington High School, is a freshman in the communications program at St. Mary's, a four-year, liberal arts college in Orchard Lake.

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