

Schools need to know all about children's handicaps

By BARBARA UNDERWOOD

Ten-year-old Johnny is diabetic. He knows it, his parents know it and some of his friends know it. He takes insulin and everything is under control. Or is it?

His classroom teacher doesn't know he is diabetic and neither do the other adults at his school. What happens if an emergency occurs?

Johnny could be epileptic, have rheumatic fever, asthma, be a hemophiliac or have minimal hearing or vision problems that were not evident to the casual observer. . . or to his teacher.

School officials say they need to know of these and other physical handicaps students have in order to provide educational programs commensurate with the child's abilities and disabilities and to deal with emergencies.

And now schools are faced not only with the need to know, but a law which requires that all youngsters from three through 18 years of age who are physically or otherwise health impaired (PHOI) be identified.

IN ADDITION to the conditions listed earlier, this also includes children with birth abnormalities such as a club foot, those with muscular dystrophy, those recuperating from an auto or other accident or drastic surgery and a number of other conditions.

Until the mid 1960s, most suburban school districts had few handicapped children, according to John Molloy Jr., director of pupil services for the Bloomfield Hills School District.

Previously, children with severe physical conditions were taught by teachers for the homebound or were placed in private programs, usually boarding schools.

"In the mid '60s, suburban school districts began to get more sophisticated and realized that many of these youngsters could be handled in a regular program," Molloy explained.

It seems logical that parents of these children would notify the schools of the problems and in many instances they do, but the recent census conducted in the Birmingham

School District indicates that many others do not.

ONE REQUIREMENT of the census was to identify all handicapped children in the school district.

When the census takers had contacted 91 per cent of the families in the district, only 29 preschool children had been identified as having handicaps.

The figure should be closer to 200 children, according to Herbert Baker, director of guidance and pupil personnel services.

"Approximately 650 children enter kindergarten each year," Baker said. "The basic minimum number of handicapped, proved by statistics, is 10-12 per cent of the population."

"Ninety-one per cent of the families were reached in the census. We will reach 100 per cent, but we are nowhere near 100 per cent of the handicapped," he added.

SOME HANDICAPS are not evident until a child reaches school, but this does not account for the numbers Baker believes are in the community.

who have not been reported to school officials.

It could be that parents don't know their child is handicapped or they don't want to know or don't want to talk about it, if they do know," he added. "Parents in this community have a great deal of difficulty accepting a handicapped child."

In order to locate the missing children, the Junior League of Birmingham will work with the school district as soon as school starts in September in a communitywide "child find" effort.

"Right now, finding the three and four year olds is critical," Baker said. He said they will develop a plan for future identification of the handicapped.

Junior League members will help in contacting parents of all three and four year olds. A developmental questionnaire will be sent to the parents after the personal contact is made.

"THE LOGICAL thing to do is to screen all three and four year olds, not just from a handicapped point of view," Baker said.

Children who are identified as needing special kinds of schooling will be seen at the district's early school assessment clinic "to get a handle on the kinds of programs needed," Baker said.

Children with special needs usually

are referred to a teacher-counselor who has "special skills a classroom teacher doesn't have," he added. The classroom teacher and teacher-counselor, working with the parents and often the family doctor, provide programs and services to meet the child's needs.

Way Elementary School in Bloomfield Hills conducted a pilot program during the 1976-77 year in which screening of each child identified 40 who received some kind of special treatment.

The screening also revealed another 20 children with minimal special needs. One example of special treatment was having wheelchairs always available for two children who were hemophiliacs, to provide them with a more protected environment free of possible jostling by other students.

"WE TAKE a common-sense approach," Molloy said. "We try to walk a tight line between providing reasonable safeguards without making the youngsters so conscious of their problems that it gets in the way of the educational program."

Molloy expects that the screening will be expanded to all buildings, but he sees it as a three-year program. A complete review of the 120 students at Andover High School recently

turned up 125 "we needed to be aware of," Molloy said.

This figure is in line with the 10-12 per cent Baker cited as statistics.

The Bloomfield Hills Schools' child find effort is part of a project called SEED, special education early development. Carmen Ziegler is in charge of the SEED project. Jody Brooks is the coordinator.

"The most critical aspect of the situation is getting parents to share information with the schools," Molloy said. "It is in the kids' best interest. It makes a difference in the service and help provided for them."

OCC sets film classes

Introduction to Film and Fundamentals of Cinematography are two of the classes which will be offered by the Communication Arts Department of Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge Campus.

Introduction to Film, a course in the history and appreciation of the motion picture film to be taught by Dr. Dan Greenberg, will involve students in discussions of feature-length films viewed in class.

Nine feature films and 17 shorts, including the original, uncut "King Kong," Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers' hit "Top Hat," Humphrey Bogart's "Casablanca," "Bicycle Thief," Kurosawa's "Throne of Blood," and Marlene Dietrich's "The Blue Angel," will be shown.

The course may be elected as either Theatre 190, or Humanities 190, or

may be audited by those who are interested but have no need for credit and desire an absence of examinations and papers.

The course, which is worth three credits, will be offered at five different times: Tuesday or Wednesday afternoons from 1-4 p.m., Wednesday evenings from 7-10 p.m., and Thursday mornings 9 a.m. to noon and afternoons from 1-4 p.m.

For those whose interest in film goes beyond viewing the Fundamentals of Cinematography course gives students an opportunity to script, shoot and edit both 8 mm and Super-8 mm film, utilizing the extensive range of equipment available. This course will be taught on Monday afternoons from 1-4 p.m. and evenings from 7-10 p.m.

Ms. Gould promoted to MDMH assistant

Ruby Jean Gould, of Farmington Hills, has been appointed executive assistant to the Michigan Department of Mental Health, according to its director, Donald Smith, MD.

Ms. Gould has been on the department's staff since 1975. For the last six months she has been a program analyst for the department's southeastern region.

Before joining the regional staff, she had been an analyst with the department's planning and evaluation system and the alternative services unit of the program development division.

She has a BA degree in education

and an MA degree in public administration from the University of Michigan.

As executive assistant, Ms. Gould's responsibilities will include liaison with the governor's office, the Mental Health Advisory Council, the Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards, special analytical studies and assistance with regional management activities.

The position was filled by Thomas Jones, a resident of Okemos, who was appointed in June to executive director of the Michigan Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities.

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