

Plymouth home boss is for shake up

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

Five months after the Plymouth center for Human Development was rocked by charges of chronic abuse and administrative insensitivity and mismanagement, the cleanup continues.

David Rosen, with 28 years experience in mental health and developmental disabilities, recently replaced former acting director Evelyn Provitt, who left the Plymouth center and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) for the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Like Ms. Provitt's, Rosen's tenure is temporary. He says he wants to stay at Plymouth for no more than six months. He adds that he is grooming his second-in-command, Eranell McIntosh-Wilson, for the position.

Stealing a page from post-World War I President Warren Harding, Rosen promises a return to normalcy.

HIS DEFINITION of normalcy differs greatly from what was normal under former superintendent William Womack.

Rosen says normal means a lifestyle which is comparable to that outside the center's walls.

"I've cleaned up institutions before, without benefit of a court order," he says, pointing to his achievements at the Lakeland Village complex near Spokane, Wash.

"There wasn't that much obvious abuse, but there was abuse. And we didn't have the drinking and the pot smoking that goes on here."

He notes that at least 30 more attendants have already been suspended pending further investigation. The reasons behind the new suspen-



DAVID ROSEN
DMH trouble-shooter

sions are suspected abuse, drinking and smoking marijuana on the job.

Since the comprehensive investigations began, 46 cases of abuse have been documented and 28 attendants have been fired.

Rosen says he will continue the disciplinary policies emphasized by Ms. Provitt.

He has other far-ranging plans. Some of his proposals, if accepted and funded, will not be completely implemented until 1985, he predicts.

THE FOUNDATION of the Plymouth center's long-awaited turnaround are the "three Ps"—program, placement and population reduction.

Programming is the cornerstone of the reformed Plymouth center.

"One of the creators of abuse is

inactivity," Rosen says.

He says children at the center will be kept busy throughout the day. "We have to strengthen the program system in each building. All of the programming directors have to be top-notch."

Some of the programming changes have already been implemented.

"Before, they went right from the dining room to the bathroom to bed," he says. "Their days ended at 6:30 or 7:30 (p.m.) We've changed the routine so that the residents are outside after dinner. Instead of going to bed, they're engaged in activities."

"It'll tire them out and they'll sleep throughout the night."

The new programs, he adds, will also lessen the use of tranquilizing drugs. The use of drugs, he says, "too often exists in large institutions like Plymouth."

"We didn't have other alternatives (to control aggressive residents). The only alternative available was the medical one. In the future we use all the other alternatives before we resort to medical controls."

ROUNDING OUT THE EFFORT to normalize life at the center, Rosen proposes that Plymouth's eight halls be drastically renovated and its resident population drastically cut.

If he sells the idea to state and federal officials, Plymouth's big wards would be replaced by "apartment-like" units housing six to eight residents.

"They will be as close to normal as possible," he promises.

HIS PLAN, however, would mean the resident population—now frozen at about 800 by a federal court order—would be cut to about 650.

The remainder would be placed in community homes. The placement plans are sketchy so far and must be worked out with DMH.

Prior to taking over the Plymouth center, Rosen, reportedly one of DMH's top directors, headed the Macomb-Oakland Regional Center for Developmental Disabilities. There he developed a community placement service that received national recognition.

"There are many people here who can live in the community," he says. "And they're usually less of a problem to the community than 'normal' children."

THE NEW DIRECTOR'S plans, however, take a back seat to meeting the changes ordered by federal District Judge Charles Joiner. The center is now especially hard-pressed to make improvements because a recently-released report charged that it has made little progress in meeting the original March 3 court order.

More than two months after Joiner's original order, the report said residents in Binet and Kennedy Halls still live in noisy, smelly conditions. The report also said there were still too few attendants and a heavy reliance on drugs and isolation to control residents.

Joiner originally ordered that 270 new attendants be hired and training be improved.

At the time the court's latest report was released, 200 new attendants had been hired and training procedures had not been significantly improved.

Suspensions and firings, Rosen says, substantially reduced the effect of the 200 new employees. Fifty new attendants are expected to begin this week, he added.

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