



MENTAL RETARDATION BULLETIN

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

DATE OF ISSUE

July 31, 1991

EFFECTIVE DATE

July 31, 1991


NUMBER

00-91-18

SUBJECT:

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC WELFARE AND THE DEPARTMENT OF AGING

BY:


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Deputy Secretary for Mental Retardation

SCOPE:

County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Administrators
Community Residential Mental Retardation Facility Directors
State Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded
(ICF/MR) Directors
Non-State Operated Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally
Retarded (ICF/MR) Directors
Base Service Unit Directors
Adult Day Care Center Directors
Vocational Facility Directors

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this bulletin is to disseminate the attached Joint Statement on Older Persons with Mental Retardation which was completed by the Department of Public Welfare and the Department of Aging.

DISCUSSION:

The Joint Statement between the Department of Public Welfare and the Department of Aging was developed by the Joint Committee on Aging and Mental Retardation in conjunction with the two Departments to promote the linkage of the two service systems. The Joint Statement is being distributed simultaneously under this Mental Retardation Bulletin and to the aging network under their Aging Information Memorandum. It should serve as a guide for cooperative action by those who work at all levels in the two service and advocacy networks.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

Ms. Phyllis Welborn, Office of Mental Retardation, Room 512 Health and Welfare Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120, telephone (717) 783-5058.

The basic intent of the Statement is to provide a framework for future efforts by the Department of Public Welfare and the Department of Aging to develop and implement joint initiatives to improve services to older persons with mental retardation, to foster a clearer understanding and awareness by those who work within the two service networks of the special needs of the aging and those with mental retardation, and of effective intervention strategies and programs to address those needs and to promote the full participation of older persons with mental retardation in the life of the community.

The mental retardation and aging networks are strongly encouraged to review and consider this document to seek ways to carry out its objectives at the local level and to promote input for systems improvement at all levels.

The Joint Statement is also transmitted through Aging Information Memorandum No. 91-22-11.

JOINT STATEMENT

ON

OLDER PERSONS WITH MENTAL RETARDATION

BY

THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF AGING
AND
THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

BACKGROUND

The Department of Aging

The Department of Aging is the single state unit designated under the Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended, to serve as an effective and visible advocate for older persons and to develop and administer a comprehensive plan of services to meet the needs of older persons in this State. Its responsibilities and activities are directed to advancing the well-being of Pennsylvania's older citizens. Designed for advocacy, planning, training, research and the administration of Federal and State funds, the Department oversees many services and benefits to older people. Most of these programs are provided through contracts with 52 local Area Agencies on Aging designated by the Secretary on Aging to serve a planning and service area made up of one or more counties.

The Department of Public Welfare

The Department of Public Welfare, through its Office of Mental Retardation, supports and administers a comprehensive array of services to address the needs of Pennsylvanians with mental retardation. Services include community residential and non-residential programs administered by County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Programs, intermediate care facilities for people with mental retardation (ICFs/MR), family support, consultation and education services. The Office of Mental Retardation directly supervises services for people in 13 State Mental Retardation Centers and Units across the State.

The community mental retardation program, established under the Pennsylvania Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MH/MR) Act of 1966, provides services and supports to enable persons with mental retardation to live successfully in the community and in State Centers and Units. Community Services available include, but are not limited to, residential options, early intervention for children, family support, adult developmental services, case management and employment services.

A Mutual Responsibility

The Department of Aging and the Department of Public Welfare, through its Office of Mental Retardation, provide programs and services under different mandates and funding resources. Historically, this resulted in the development of two distinct service systems which, in earlier years, did not often encounter the needs of older persons with mental retardation.

Now, there is an increasing number of older adults in Pennsylvania with mental retardation. According to some estimates, among Pennsylvanians with mental retardation in 1980, there were over 21,000 of age 60 or above. That number is expected to increase to approximately 29,000 by the year 2030. For people in this group, the challenges of mental retardation are compounded by the real and perceived problems which accompany the aging process. There is a need for greater coordination and collaboration between the aging and mental retardation service networks in order to assure greater availability and accessibility to the support necessary to enable older persons with mental retardation to attain and maintain emotional well being and a life in the community at the highest possible level of independence.

Without any attempt to reduce their uniquely separate roles and program responsibilities, the Department of Aging and the Department of Public Welfare affirm a mutual responsibility for the development and the promotion of stronger linkages between the two service networks at all levels - Federal, State and local. This responsibility derives from the following values shared by the aging and mental retardation networks:

People who are served by the two networks should expect:

- o to be treated with respect and dignity;
- o to have a positive, valued image in the community, free from discrimination;
- o to have choices, opportunities and options; and
- o to have easy access to a coordinated array of services.

People who use services provided by the two networks should expect them to be:

- o relevant and meaningful;
- o easily accessible and available;
- o coordinated with other service systems;
- o provided in the least restrictive environment and in a manner which enhances independence; and
- o supportive of families and caregivers.

INTENT OF THE STATEMENT

The intent of this statement is to provide a framework for future efforts by the Department of Aging and the Department of Public Welfare to develop and implement joint initiatives to improve services to older persons with mental retardation, to foster a clearer understanding and awareness by those who work within the two service networks of the special needs of the aging and those with mental retardation and of effective intervention strategies and programs to address those needs and to promote the full participation of older persons with mental retardation in the life of the community.

The Department of Aging and the Department of Public Welfare agree to work together to develop and implement initiatives in support of the goals and objectives outlined below and to undertake other collaborative activities which promote the independence and well-being of older persons with mental retardation.

GOAL I

To foster a clearer understanding and awareness by those who work within the two service networks of the challenges of aging and mental retardation and of effective intervention strategies and programs to address those needs.

Objectives

1. To promote at the State and local level the establishment of an ongoing system of cross training between those who work in the aging network and those who work in the mental retardation network.
2. To increase the sharing and exchange of information on best practices and other important developments in the aging and developmental disabilities fields.
3. To encourage aging and developmental disability agencies to share technical resources and technical assistance.
4. To encourage the development and public issuance of joint statements similar to this statement between local providers of services to the aging and to persons with mental retardation.

GOAL II

To promote the full participation of older persons with mental retardation in the life of the community.

Objectives

1. To encourage the development of cooperative public information and education initiatives to enhance the image of

- older persons with mental retardation and their meaningful participation in public situations and activities.
2. To collaborate on advocacy activities on behalf of older persons with mental retardation.
 3. To encourage Pennsylvania's colleges, universities, and other institutions of learning to address the issues of aging among Pennsylvania's older persons with developmental disabilities in their curriculums and in their continuing education programs.
 4. To promote and facilitate opportunities for older people with mental retardation to interact with their peers and other members of the general community.

GOAL III

To improve services to older persons with mental retardation.

Objectives

1. To encourage the development of local advisory committees to address joint planning/problem solving. These advisory committees should be representative of both service networks and older persons with mental retardation, their families and other interested individuals.
2. To promote the pursuit of cooperative endeavors that would benefit older persons with mental retardation and their families.
3. To promote, where appropriate, the successful integration of older persons with mental retardation with other consumers and volunteers in programs for the aging at senior centers and nutrition sites, and other settings administered through local agencies.
4. To promote collaborative case management/care management of older persons with mental retardation.
5. To promote the development of a wider range of options and guidance for older persons with mental retardation to choose a retirement life that meets their individual needs.
6. To identify and explore the removal of existing barriers to the effective coordination of funding from various public and private sources.
7. To explore the possibilities for joint funding of discretionary projects designed to demonstrate effective new strategies and interventions to improve the quality of life for older persons with mental retardation.
8. To promote training designed to strengthen the capabilities of health care professionals to provide effective services to older persons with mental retardation.

DESIGNATED STAFF RESPONSIBILITY

The Department of Aging and the Department of Public Welfare jointly agree to designate staff to:

1. Coordinate the efforts by each Department to fulfill the goals and objectives of this statement.
2. Meet together regularly to review the progress of these efforts and develop recommendations for joint initiatives to fulfill the goals and objectives of this statement.
3. Encourage local service networks and the community to fulfill the spirit of this statement.

INTERAGENCY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Department of Aging and the Department of Public Welfare agree to appoint, and convene on a regular basis, a special advisory committee, representative of the Statewide service networks for the aging and older persons with mental retardation, their families and other interested individuals, to review the local effect of efforts by the two Departments to fulfill the goals and objectives of this statement and to develop recommendations for future joint efforts.

EFFECT OF THE STATEMENT

This statement is not intended to, and does not, create any contractual rights or obligations for the signatory agencies or any other party. Requests for modification, amendment or termination may be initiated by either party through the written notification of the other party.

FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF AGING:

L. M. Rhodes
Linda M. Rhodes
Secretary of Aging

7/23/91
Date

Richard Browdie
Richard Browdie
Deputy Secretary of Aging

7/24/91
Date

FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE:

John F. White, Jr.
John F. White, Jr.
Secretary of Public Welfare

JUL 31 1991
Date

Steven Eidelman
Steven Eidelman
Deputy Secretary for Mental Retardation

July 24, 1991
Date