SCAPE:

State Center and Mental Retardation Unit Directors
County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Administrators

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Bulletin is to issue a directive to close admissions to state centers and mental retardation units for persons 17 years of age or younger.

BACKGROUND:

Over the past 20 years, the Department of Public Welfare, through policy, program design, resource allocation, legislation and regulatory actions, has consistently supported the development of community programs and services to assist families to stay together by supporting family members with mental retardation in their homes. Major initiatives have included:

- Early Intervention Programs
- Home-based Services under the 2176 Medicaid Waiver Program
- Family Support Services

One effect of these initiatives has been to greatly expand the availability of services to support people in the community. Consequently, the number of people receiving these services has grown from 24,523 in 1986 to 31,348 in 1994.

Another effect of these initiatives has been a decline in the number of persons residing in large congregate institutional settings. There were 5,078 persons residing in State Centers in 1986 and 3,469 in October of 1994. This is especially true in the case of children who are 17 years of age or younger, whose numbers have declined from 189 in 1986 to 5 in 1994.

REFER COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS TO:

Nancy R. Thaler, Deputy Secretary for Mental Retardation
As a result of the availability of community support services and
the clear preference for such services among families, the Department of
Public Welfare is discontinuing services for children who are 17 years of age
or younger in state operated centers and mental retardation units for people
with mental retardation.

Because state facilities will no longer provide these services,
and will no longer have the capacity or expertise to serve children with
mental retardation, the Department is issuing a directive to formally close
admissions to these facilities.

DIRECTIVE:

Effective January 1, 1995, the Department will no longer accept
children who are 17 years of age or younger, for admission to state operated
centers and mental retardation units for people with mental retardation.

The legal authority for this directive is 62 P.S. §303 of the
Public Welfare Code, and 50 P.S. §202(a) of the Mental Health and Mental
Retardation Act of 1966, that state the following:

62 P.S. §303

"With regard to state institutions, the Department shall have
the power and its duty shall be:

(1) To determine the capacity of such institutions;

(2) Except as otherwise provided by law, to determine and
designate the type of persons to be received by such
institutions, the proportion of each type to be received
therein, and the districts from which persons shall be
received by such institutions."

50 P.S. §202(a)

"The Department shall operate all state facilities and shall
assign such functions to each as the Secretary shall
prescribe."