

which can eventually go to a formal hearing to assure that all questions have been answered.

While the individual candidate for community living is being thus prepared at the developmental center, another effort is simultaneously taking place to locate or establish the best possible residence for him or her.

That procedure involves both state employees and a number of sponsoring agencies such as the Association for Retarded Children, United Cerebral Palsy, Catholic Charities and more.

We are also bound in that effort by monitoring devices and groups and, most recently, are required by law to gain the formal cooperation of the involved municipality — community planning board — in selecting a potential residence. Any potential deficiency in residence comes to the attention of any number of people, groups or agencies and is made public at both meetings and formal hearings.

At any rate, the main source of community residential programs for the mentally retarded are community residences, homes operated by respectable

agencies or the state itself. We use no boarding houses, no single room occupancy hotels and no proprietary homes for adults although a handful of retarded people remain in the latter who were sent there under a previous administration.

Other mentally retarded former residents of state developmental centers live with people in their homes under a foster or family care program and a few are capable of what we call supervised living or partial independence.

Under the terms of the consent decree, no resident may go to a home without all of these steps having been taken to protect his future well being. That is also this agency's policy in places where the decree's terms are not binding.

Further, every client placed in the community must have a full six-hour program of daily services suited to his or her particular needs. All of these conditions are to be overseen by a caseworker whose job it is to assure that they are there, and are adapted to the changing needs of each individual.

We in turn are watched over by the

Willowbrook Review Panel, a court-appointed body which monitors all aspects of the decree's implementation, as well as Consumer Advisory Boards composed of parents and relatives of residents of all our facilities.

I can proudly say that our programs not only aspire to meet the "ideal of deinstitutionalization," but have assured that the mentally retarded people we are guiding to a better life in the community will find a life that is indeed better, and will be for the rest of their lives.

We can understand that every effort we make will not bring cheers; our audience has other interests. But criticism of what is being done should be just. For to be otherwise the injustice falls upon the mentally retarded themselves.

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(Thomas A. Coughlin 3rd is commissioner of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.)

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