

Rhinebeck only accepts people under 21, Ms. Seery discovered, although it can keep students past their 21st birthday until other "appropriate placements" are found. So Joey could stay at Rhinebeck for at least a year, but only if he enters the facility by April 4.

As Ms. Seery tried to sort Joey's options, she became mired in a sea of bureaucracy. The Committee on the Handicapped held firm in its conviction that Joey did not need residential placement. Ms. Seery turned to Arthur Webb, commissioner of OMRDD, who was sympathetic but still uncertain what his agency could accomplish without the help of the Committee on the Handicapped.

With Joey's 21st birthday only nine days away, the committee is no longer handling Joey's case. But now OMRDD seems to be floundering on the question of Joey's placement.

One OMRDD official, Mary Jane Barnett, said the department had decided to place Joey in a group home for the mentally retarded. Yet another department official, Barbara Hawes, recently told Ms. Seery that the agency is still considering three options in Joey's case: the Rhinebeck facility, a foster home and a group home. "Meanwhile, Joey's still at

Willowbrook," Ms. Seery said. "Everybody agrees it's an inappropriate setting, but he's still there. And nobody says he's going to a facility which gives Prader-Willi persons the proper controls.

"They talk about another placement, but when? Where? They talk about one place, and then someone from OMRDD says, 'No, wait a minute, that group home isn't going to be opening up on schedule.'

"They were talking about a home which is going to be built for persons with Prader-Willi, which, if all goes well, will open in April 1985. But that's if all goes well, which we know it never does. And what will Joey do until then?"

Ms. Seery said the problem isn't a lack of concern on the part of the people at OMRDD or the Committee on the Handicapped.

"Everybody's concerned. But they are afraid to act," she said. "Everybody says things like, 'I'll get you a definite answer on Friday, a definite answer.' And then on Friday, they give you three or four options."

Ms. Seery said the DeLillo case has become an obsession with her.

"I was told by different people that I had to be more objective about this," she said. "But I couldn't be that way. I put myself in her (Gloria DeLillo's) shoes. I thought maybe the problem all along has been that there are too many objective people out there."

Ms. Seery said she won't rest until she sees a promise in writing that Joey will be placed in an appropriate facility.

As for Mrs. DeLillo, she alternates between optimism and depression. Her greatest fear is that Joey will be sent back home. "What will I do with him?" she said. Her greatest wish is to see her son "settled."

"But I still feel like I'm hitting my head against a brick wall," Mrs. DeLillo added. "Nobody's moving."

(This is the second part of a series. Tomorrow: Who's to blame.)

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