

Deaf man held back by rehab plan

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — A proposed rehabilitation program for a deaf man misdiagnosed during childhood as mentally retarded is too expensive and continues to treat the man as mentally retarded, experts say.

Joseph McNulty, of Syracuse, has the rehabilitative possibilities of Helen Keller, said Dr. Allan Yozawitz, a neuropsychologist at Syracuse's Hutchings Psychiatric Center.

But Keller would never have reached her potential under the rehabilitation program proposed for McNulty and neither will McNulty, Yozawitz said Monday in his review of the program.

McNulty, 26, was awarded \$1.5 million last year by a state Court of Claims, which found the state and its doctors committed medical malpractice in misdiagnosing

McNulty's deafness as retardation.

Yozawitz reviewed a rehabilitation program submitted by McNulty's legal guardian, Daniel Geller, to a judge who will decide whether some of McNulty's award should be used to pay for the program.

The proposed plan was designed by Dr. Larry Quinsland of Rochester's National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

"If Anne Sullivan were employed in a similar program for only 15 hours a week, society likely never would have known the true potential of a Helen Keller," Yozawitz wrote. "It is troubling that if this program were to be executed as proposed, we likely never will know the full potential of a Joseph McNulty."

Dr. Jerome Schein, a deaf rehabilitation expert now working

in Canada, told Geller the proposed plan aims too low and that it essentially continues the treatment McNulty was receiving from the state — as that of a mentally retarded person.

But Geller told McNulty's lawyers that Schein's plan, which would cost \$125,000 a year over three years, was too expensive. Quinsland's three-year plan would cost \$40,000 a year.

In a letter to McNulty's lawyers, Yozawitz said Quinsland's plan for a combination of classroom and social learning is "reasonable and appropriate." But Yozawitz said he was "considerably distressed by the oversimplicity" of the program's content "and by the limited time proposed for direct interventions."