



George A. Koppchick, Jr.
Superintendent

PENNHURST CENTER *me*

SPRING CITY, PENNSYLVANIA 19475 • TELEPHONE (215) 948-3500

January 25, 1980

The Editor
Pennsylvania Message
Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens
1500 North Second Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102

To the Editor,

In reading the December, 1979 issue of the Pennsylvania Message, I saw the article entitled "What About the Most Severely Disabled People?" (p.7). Although you did not credit the author or give the source of this article, I know it is reprinted from the November, 1979 issue of Action for Community Services, published by the Office of the Special Master.

I feel this article, as presented, does a disservice to all those people who are striving to see a comprehensive and responsive system of retardation services built, one which will serve the needs of all retarded people. Ms. Fenton, editor of Action, incorrectly interpreted the findings of the Temple study in her article. You have compounded her error by reprinting it verbatim. Her error is that, while showcasing the idea that every retarded person can be adequately served in community settings (an idea which I totally support), she couples it with the false notion that the existing community service system, as it stands today, can meet the needs of everyone still living at Pennhurst. The proof of this "fact" is that the Pennhurst population is supposedly no different than the people already being served in CLAs. This is a gross distortion of reality and is a conclusion that cannot be supported by the Temple study. By giving people the false notion that existing services can handle everyone, the services truly needed by the "most severely disabled people" will never be realized. Why should people support the creation of sophisticated community services for the severely disabled if the present system of apartments, etc. is enough? The present community options are not enough and must be expanded if everyone is to enjoy a successful life in the community.

I am enclosing a copy of a letter I sent to Leslie Fenton, expanding on my concerns. The letter also touches on some fundamental design errors in the original report. I presume you have a copy of the report. If you do not, it is called Institution and Community: A Comparison of Populations. I will gladly send you a copy if you wish, or you can obtain it from the DD Center at Temple. I am also enclosing a copy of Ms. Fenton's response.

Sincerely,

J. Gregory Pirmann
Special Assistant to the Superintendent

JGP/sjm