

January 21, 1982

C.A.R.S. -- COMMUNITY GROUP HOMES

Doreen Befus's concerns about the need for more services for the mentally handicapped.

I was asked by the community special services to invite the mentally handicapped into some educational programs which would be beneficial to them when they move out into the community on their own. They need to learn how to handle themselves when seeking employment and to be able to stand up for their rights and speak up to tell employers what they are able to do so that they are not thought of as being too retarded for employment in normal situations. However, I was told that they could not attend as they had chores to do at the group homes. This is a poor attitude!

Other opportunities for community special services have also been rejected by the people operating the group homes. The residents were not told of the official opening of "The Boat" drop-in centre even though I phoned three times to remind them about it, so not one group home was represented at the opening. The residents are not encouraged to take part in community activities, nor are they allowed to make their own decisions. The ones in charge of the group homes are often quite rude on the phone and do not want to have me get involved with the residents, nor to have me encourage community awareness of the situation.

One resident who used to be in the senior citizens group home is now in the Auxiliary Hospital because she is unable to walk. I had phoned to see if the senior citizens could go to visit her, or send a card, or collect some money to send a gift to the hospital. When nothing was done I approached the administration and told the C.A.R.S. manager about it. She said that she would check into it, but to this day nothing has been done for the lady in the hospital -- not even a Christmas card from the senior citizens group home. I blame this on lack of communication between the supervisors and the residents and consider it a very bad situation.

Those of us, like myself, who are out in the community and take an interest in helping the mentally handicapped find a normal place in society, are concerned about the lack of public awareness regarding the needs to be met if we are to help these people. Unless we can change attitudes of the people working with them, the mentally handicapped will have to continue living according to strict institutional laws and will never be able to live normal lives.



C.A.R.S. -- Community Group Homes - Continued

So these must be our goals:

To change attitudes.

To increase awareness.

To establish better communication.

Only by accomplishing these goals will we be able to take steps toward achieving normalization of the lives of these people, and helping them to learn to speak for themselves.

I hope that I have made myself clear in stating my concerns about the lack of co-operation I have encountered in trying to help the mentally handicapped who are in the group homes.

Thank you.

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