

Laurelton Programs and Grants

At the Laurelton State Institution for Feeble-minded Women of Child-bearing Age, on October 19, 1925, rather than to just continue to incarcerate and isolate inmates, a program of rehabilitation and parole was put into place. Hilda Jolly filled several roles as investigator and parole officer and she had run the early schools. In this program, the first girl was paroled December 19, 1925.

Policy was established by the state Central Office. Unfortunately, there is no record currently available for programs for a number of years. Following the end of World War II, some money became available both from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the U. S. Federal Government for programming with the improved goals of service, attitudes, and treatment.

By 1965, there were 5 (some other records enumerate 6) separate and distinct departments: Cottage Life, Education, Vocational Training, Recreation, Occupational Therapy, and Speech and Hearing. Also in 1965, the Behavior Modification/ Token Economy was begun by Mary Hartley in C 10. When she moved on, Dr. Judith Stein took over the program.

She was followed by James Reisinger for two years and then S. Reeves Power took over the leadership (1969). Ronald A. Madle was first the Assistant Program Coordinator and then the Coordinator for C 10 and C 1. One of his responsibilities was to track both tokens earned by the residents and behavioral changes reflected in the token distribution. Different colored tokens represented different behaviors i. e. social, self-care, domestic etc. Classes operated on reinforcement principles and residents attended academic, language, pre-vocational, recreational, and vocational sessions.

The program was specifically based on "the operant learning or conditioning theory" as espoused by B. F. Skinner, Harvard Psychologist, "that learning is a function of change in overt behavior". Anne Kelly worked as the Special Education Teacher in C 10 originally. In opposition to the operant learning theory, Johnston Cottage was run on the strictly classical analytical theory under the leadership of Sheldon Gelman, a social worker. as coordinator (1969 - 1970). He was followed by Donald Bowman.

In July of 1969, in accordance with the Commonwealth's Mental Health/Mental Retardation laws, the first male was admitted to Laurelton.

The late 1960s and early 1970s was a big time for grants. The Hospital Improvement Plan (The HIP Grant) Grant # 51P - 70087 (Behavior Modification/Token Economy Program Grant) was received in 1969 for 3 years, after rewriting of the grant proposal by James Reisinger, proposal originator and Director for 2 years and Ronald A. Madle. It covered 40% of the facility. Ronald Madle was also Research Director. S. Reeves Power became the Co-director along with the Superintendent. By-laws stated that the Superintendent had to be the Co-director. The program began with C 10 and C 1, then followed by C 9 and Linn Cottages and finally by McClure Cottage. In September 1972, Sue B. Latham took over as HIP Program Co-Director. The Grant included funding for several positions and expanded behavior oriented programs.

The concluding report commenced with an introduction to the program objectives and the procedures used in resident selection and staff training. Finally, there was a description of the general token reinforcement program and additional incentive programs. The second portion of the report

entitled "Modifying Behaviors", included a description of the specific programs developed to teach self-help, social interaction, language, recreational, academic, and vocational skills. Quite a difference in the 50 years between the 1920s and the 1970s.

Concurrently, in 1971, there were 24 students in Johnston Cottage Readjustment Unit. there were 8 steps in each unit. Social Unit D was the highest level and had apartment type living. The HIP Grant was extended and Meg Paterson was hired in 1972 for a regular position in VAS. She went on to be the director of the Workshop (sheltered workshop) for many years. By 1974, the focus was on Unit Teams followed by the Cluster System in June of 1983. In 1993, Ireland Hall Cluster Team was given particular mention.

In July 1976, the Pennsylvania House Bill - Act 203 changed the names of all state schools and hospitals to Centers.

Developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Rater Scale, an Adaptive Behavior Scale to track and individual's all-around progress was then followed by the Developmental Record.

In 1984, Ronald Madle and Dr Michael Franczak were primary co-authors and co-investigators for the PUSH Program. In the late 1990s, before closure, there was the Person Centered Plan (PCP). From 1992 until 1998 it focused on aiding 190 individual residents to leave the community in the most effective manner, hopefully for community living situations. Judy Pelter was much involved with this program as she had served as a committee member for the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare Office. Only a handful of residents went to other institutions.