

AIMS OF FERNALD\*

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\*In the mid-1960s the courts began to recognize that institution residents should not be performing the functions of paid employees. Community placement, rather than institutional peonage, of more competent residents was becoming a priority. In 1968, as a member of Fernald School's Professional Steering Committee, Dr. Barrett was invited to prepare a statement on the aims of the institution with respect to this new concept of anti-peonage. This statement, adopted as the institution's official statement, was distributed by the superintendent to all institution personnel.

The pressure of daily activities and the multitude of problems faced by all of us sometimes make us lose sight of the purpose of the Fernald School. We are here to help each of our residents to develop his maximum potential, i.e., to grow physically, emotionally and academically as much as it is possible for him to do so. Being mentally retarded does not diminish the resident's right to privacy, normal and human relationships, and happiness. Few of us would quarrel with these principles, but nearly all of us at times neglect them.

I would like to emphasize the following points as examples of what we must do in order to fulfill our purpose:

1. As soon as new methods of education and training have been proven to be effective, they should become the rule in all buildings. It has been shown, both here and in many other institutions, that individual training and modern procedures of behavior modification are effective. These procedures are simple, they work, and they are not experimental. We have an experienced staff who can teach them. I expect each employee, no matter what his job is, to be ready and willing to use these procedures once he has been shown how to use them.
2. Fernald is a school. Some of our residents can learn academics, others only much simpler tasks. All of the employees at Fernald, not just those in the School Department, must be ready and willing to teach our residents.
3. Originally, staffing assignments at Fernald were based on the assumption that part of the work would be done by mildly retarded residents. However, we know now that mildly retarded people are able to live successfully in the community. Therefore, we must do everything possible to move such people out of the institution quickly. We must make certain that they are prepared for independent life. We must test their progress toward independent living by providing them with increasing responsibility for their own self-care and self-direction.
4. Once our mildly retarded residents leave, who is to do their work? The answer is not simple, but it is urgent. To accomplish this, we must a) analyze the job to be done and break it down into simple steps, as is done in industry, and b) in teaching the moderately or severely retarded, we must show patience and understanding. In addition, we must learn modern techniques. Many of you will be given the opportunity to learn these.
5. Teaching the more severely retarded is a rewarding experience. Many of them are capable of learning more than we think. Furthermore, assigning and teaching these residents simple tasks will reduce undesirable behavior and violence toward others and self. In many instances, such undesirable behavior is the result of idleness, boredom, or inability to attract attention in any other way. It is necessary, then, that all personnel who work with severely retarded persons learn what to attend to in order to assure that they are not, unintentionally, giving the assaultive, self-abusive or "problem" resident good reason to continue his undesirable behavior.

To give our residents the best opportunities for development, it is essential to update our practices in the manner outlined above. We expect all personnel to learn and use new training procedures that have been demonstrated to improve the capabilities of retarded people.