

Provision for the
FEEBLE-MINDED and EPILEPTICS
Efficient Care and Training
Relief for the Homes and Society

Committee:

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Communications should be addressed to the Chairman at Vineland

Third Report of Committee
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Third Report of the Committee on Provision for the Feeble-Minded and Epileptic

FEBRUARY 9, 1912.

At the time of the second report of this Committee, made in February, 1911, all of the appropriations for the feeble-minded and epileptic for the previous year had become available. The situation to-day is as follows:

Feeble-Minded Women.

For the State Institution for Feeble-Minded Women there was available November 1, 1910, fifty thousand dollars for a hospital and dormitory building which would accommodate thirty additional women. The Legislature of 1911 made an added appropriation of ten thousand dollars to make this building fireproof. This being in the Supplemental Bill, was available for use May 1, 1911. Ground was broken for this building September, 1911, and work continued until January, 1912, at which time the foundations were all up. Work was then suspended owing to the cold weather, which made it impossible to continue. It is expected that work will begin as soon as the weather permits, and we are assured that if this is done the building will be ready for occupancy about August 1, 1912. If completed on that date, this will be twenty-one months after the first appropriation became available.

Because of the extra efforts made to accede to the demands for admission the institution has become much crowded, for 64 women have been admitted. This includes the filling of 23 vacancies caused by death and discharge, showing that the crowding in of extra beds allowed a net increase of 41 women.

There are now on file at the institution the names of 18 women awaiting admission, besides which there are 49 women, twenty-one years old or over, who should be transferred from the Training School and thus make room at the latter institution for the children awaiting admission there. There are also a large number of feeble-minded women improperly placed in other institutions.

The State Village for Epileptics.

On November 1, 1910, there was available for the State Village:

(a) \$60,000 for two buildings to accommodate 50 epileptic patients each. Final plans for these buildings were accepted by the Board June 20,

1911, and the contracts awarded July 17, 1911. Both buildings are in process of construction. The one for men is up to the first floor joists. The walls of the women's building are up to the second story. Work is now temporarily suspended. If construction is resumed as soon as weather and other conditions permit, these buildings should be ready for occupancy in the autumn of 1912.

(b) \$35,000 for a hospital. Plans were accepted and contracts awarded at the same time as for the above. This building has the foundations and part of the first floor completed. It should be finished as above.

(c) \$45,000 for a building to accommodate 60 feeble-minded men. Final plans were accepted early in May and contracts awarded June 5, 1911. This building has the cellar and foundations completed and work started on the first story. Work on it, too, should be started when the weather permits and it should be completed about the same time as the others.

On November 1, 1911, there became available \$40,000 for a custodial building for epileptics, and \$30,000 for a building for epileptic patients. At the present date (February 9, 1912) neither plans nor specifications have been presented to the managers of the Village.

The Legislature of 1910 appropriated \$2,500 (available November 1, 1910,) for a tubercular shack at the Village. The bids were opened June 5, 1911, and the lowest was \$5,600, and consequently the appropriation was allowed to lapse. An appropriation of \$3,000 was made by the Legislature of 1911 (available November 1, 1911), but as it is evident that this will not build a suitable shack, the Managers will request a supplemental appropriation from the present Legislature.

In the State Village, too, it has been necessary to greatly overcrowd to meet the demands for admission. From November 1, 1910, to November 1, 1911, 30 males and 32 females were admitted. Deducting the discharges and deaths there was a net increase of 31.

On December 20, 1911, a new cottage for 42 patients was opened. The appropriation for this was made by the Legislature of 1909 and became available November 1, 1909.

There is on file at the State Village the names of 130 epileptics awaiting admission, and in other institutions are a large number of epileptics who should be transferred to the Village as soon as sufficient accommodations are provided.

Applications for the admission of feeble-minded men are constantly being presented, so that there are now about 20 awaiting the opening of the first building, and at the Training School for Children there are 104

men who should be transferred and so make room for children there.

The Training School.

Under the State Constitution the Training School cannot receive appropriations from the State for buildings or improvements, but since May 1, 1911, it has, from private funds, erected four small buildings. Two are now occupied and the others will be ready for occupancy by April 1, 1912. They accommodate 55 pupils.

The Training School can only receive more State wards when some of the 104 men and 49 women who are now there are transferred to the State Institution for Women or the men's department of the State Village at Skillman. There are now on the list awaiting admission to the Training School 98 boys and 27 girls from the various counties of the State.

The State is now caring for:

226 at the State Institution for Feeble-Minded Women,

372 at the State Village for Epileptics,

315 at the Training School for Children,

a total of 911.

The following feeble-minded and epileptic are reported:

72 at the State Home for Girls,

75 at the State Home for Boys,

135 at the Rahway Reformatory,

90 at the State Hospital for Insane at Trenton,

177 at the State Hospital for Insane at Morris Plains,

a total of 542 in institutions not adapted for their treatment or training.

There are 393 on the waiting lists of the three institutions for the feeble-minded and epileptics. In the families that have been studied by these institutions there are 3,093 more. And there are 1,031 others at large who have been reported by physicians and by the field workers connected with the institutions. Add to this the 198 reported from the almshouses.

All of the above means that there are now on record in our State 6,063 feeble-minded and epileptic persons. Of these 911 are in institutions planned for their care and treatment, 740 are in other institutions, and 4,412 are at large. It is certain that there are many others of whom we have no record.

Appropriations have been made for buildings which will, when completed, provide for 470, leaving 4,682 known cases for whom no proper provision has been made.

The Three Classes.

The feeble-minded are divided into three classes according to their mental condition. The highest grade called morons, the middle grade called imbeciles and the lowest grade called idiots.

The three institutions are now caring for some of the first two and a very few of the last.

Chapter 229 (page 504) of the laws of 1911 provided for the care, maintenance and custody of idiotic and imbecile males and idiotic male epileptics, and provided for an appropriation of \$100,000 to carry out the provisions of the Act. The regular appropriation bill, however, did not contain this item. Therefore, nothing has been done.

In order to care for the male idiots it is therefore urged that this Legislature appropriate enough to erect and equip at least one building for this class at Skillman.

There is now no provision for idiotic women. This Legislature should appropriate at least enough for one building at the State Institution for Feeble-Minded Women for this class.

The greatest damage and the greatest expense for the future is found in the lack of care for the feeble-minded women of child-bearing age. It has been found that feeble-minded women average twice as many children as normals.

The Children's Bureau of Philadelphia reports 20 feeble-minded women who had sixty children by thirty-eight fathers. Chester County, Pa., reports that of 105 women delivered at their almshouse, 100 were feeble-minded. In our own State, 26 almshouses, with an aggregate population of 1,635, report 198 of these as feeble-minded, 38 children of whom 22 are illegitimate, are known to have been born of the women.

All recent studies make it evident that from 60 to 90 per cent. of the cases of feeble-mindedness are hereditary, with alcoholism, tuberculosis, syphilis, prostitution and law-breaking of every kind inextricably mixed with this condition.

In the 720 families studied by the three institutions there are many cases coming from good families where accident, sickness or other misfortune has caused the feeble-mindedness or epilepsy. But in the other families we find 3,093 persons known to be feeble-minded or epileptic, 6,375 known to be normal, and 8,251 undetermined. It is certainly penny wise and pound foolish for our Commonwealth to hesitate in taking care of at least those who are of such an age as to be able to bring into the world others like themselves, and this Committee urges the necessity of at once making adequate provision for such.

The feeble-minded and epileptic who are now in suitable institutions have all creature comforts, cleanliness, and medical attention. They are made happy by entertainments and games. Many become very helpful in household duties of every description. Some acquire a surprising proficiency with tools, learning carpet weaving, mattress and broom making, and the elements of carpentry, painting, dressmaking and tailoring. They are effective workers as laborers on concrete work and road making, and on the farm and in the care of poultry and stock, they are when under super-

vision far superior to many a "hired hand." In these ways they contribute much toward their own support, reducing the cost of maintenance to a marked degree.

There are excellent school departments where the elements of reading, writing, etc., are taught to the small number who can really use this knowledge to good advantage. There are also in these institutions departments of research where most careful studies of the cases are being made. These include the tracing of family histories, full information of the social conditions in which these individuals are reared, careful and repeated records of their mental activities and examinations of the various body fluids.

But what of the feeble-minded and epileptics in the other institutions of the State? They are receiving creature comforts, to be sure, but there are no facilities for the other things. Many in the reformatory institutions are sent there for crimes committed because of the lack of moral responsibility. Arson, thievery, vicious attacks without apparent motive and innumerable immoralities are charged against these irresponsible (so recognized by the superintendents of the reformatory institutions).

Records on file at the Chicago Juvenile Court show that $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the repeating juvenile offenders are epileptics, in whom the sexual instinct develops abnormally early and in a pronounced manner.*

No questionable case should be passed upon by any judge until a competent "research" examination of the prisoner is made and an abstract of the findings presented to the judge. In the interim the offenders should be distributed to institutions under a suspended sentence. By this method the incompetents would be sent to the proper institutions, where they might live out harmless, useful and happy lives. As our so-called justice is now administered to this class, they go in circles; crime, arrest, trial, imprisonment, parole, discharge, the possible breeding of others of their kind, and crime again. A most costly circle, entailing upon the community a burden of expense as foolish as it is unnecessary, and a pitiable injustice to the victim.

In the hospitals for the insane, the feeble-minded and epileptics are adding to the already overcrowded condition. They do not need the care of the expert physician and the expensive protected buildings—they want mothering, directing and the opportunity of the land. They need a job, with material found with which to work, instructions as to what to do, a place to perform the labor, some one to take care of the product, and

Eight hundred consecutive unselected repeated offenders show seven and half per cent. known epileptics, others suspected. They are the most dangerous and incalculable criminals. Pleasant one day, vicious the next, committing heinous crimes; about twenty per cent. of same group feeble-minded, most of them high grade and readily overlooked in court procedure; after all, fairly good talkers.

WM. HEALY.

encouragement—and they are useful and happy. The hospital for the insane does not furnish this.

In the almshouse, they lead lives of idleness and mischief. Numerous fires have been started to "see the engine come." The other inmates often tease or impose upon them. The women in the almshouses are most pitiable. They go out in the springtime, live promiscuous lives during the summer and return in the fall to have a shelter in which to give birth to an illegitimate child—frequently feeble-minded. The story is common.

New Jersey has a compulsory school medical inspection law and the physicians are constantly finding feeble-minded in the schools. There is also a law requiring the establishment of special classes for backward children in every school district in which are found ten or more children three or more years below the normal, and wherever these classes have been organized it is soon found that many children who were supposed to be merely backward are actually feeble-minded.

Now that this retardation, which may be either backwardness or feeble-mindedness, has recognition in law it becomes important to improve our facilities for testing and so perfect the tests that they can be fully relied upon. We recommend that in all of the institutions where research work is being carried on, special efforts be made to try out the present methods of testing and devise new ones, until we may be enabled to determine satisfactorily who shall be treated as a responsible and reformable person, and who is an irresponsible, and as soon as a satisfactory method is found it should be made available to all.

If there are 282 feeble-minded in the reformatories of New Jersey, it shows a woeful miscarriage of justice, for these persons are not morally responsible—they act upon uncontrollable impulses—they form poor judgments—their reasoning is false and their will power so weak that they are lead by the wildest fancies or by evilly-disposed persons of stronger will. However, many of them have pleasant faces, fluent tongues and taking manners, and so they easily mislead judge, jury and prosecutor. Such a person finding himself the chief object of attention frequently exaggerates his crime in the telling until he is considered a hardened bravado, though he may really be a mental defective. In mere justice to our own common sense we must learn to recognize mental deficiency in all of its forms.

All of the facts relating to the inheritance of epilepsy and feeble-mindedness show that to properly safeguard our community, we must prevent the mating of such people, and to do this it is necessary to know where they are. We therefore urge upon all citizens to report to the Commissioner of Charities or to this Committee all cases of feeble-mindedness or epilepsy known to them. One of the functions of this Committee is to gather and tabulate such statistics.

This Committee wishes at this point to make record of the fact that

it was the concerted action of the several thousand citizens, to whom this report is now being sent, which made possible the appropriations noted in the earlier part of this report.

The Legislature during its session in 1911 enacted laws providing:

(a) For the sterilization of certain feeble-minded, epileptics, criminals and other defectives.

(b) That Boards of Education ascertain what children are three or more years below normal, and requiring the establishment of Special Classes whenever ten or more such children are found in any school district.

(c) The medical examiners shall examine Special Class children every three months.

The New Jersey institutions are recognized as being progressive in all matters relating to the care and study of their wards. The research departments in the three institutions are gathering facts of the utmost importance in the proper understanding of the causes and treatment of epilepsy and feeble-mindedness.

One hundred and eighty public school teachers from various parts of the United States have been trained in the Summer School for Teachers at Vineland. This training is to fit them to better understand the backward, feeble-minded and special children found in the public schools. The demand for such trained teachers is so great that this work should be extended.

Perhaps the most striking evidence of the standard of work being done by the institutions of New Jersey is the number and character of visitors from other States and countries who come to study our institutions and their methods.

Such a standard would not have been possible were it not that the members of our Legislature have been liberal and wise in their treatment of the institutions, and a large number of thoughtful citizens and societies have aided in securing results. The mailing lists of this Committee includes nearly three thousand citizens who have used their personal efforts to secure proper care, study and treatment for the feeble-minded and epileptic of our State.

In presenting this report the Committee on Provision for the Feeble-Minded and Epileptic wishes to reiterate the policy outlined in previous reports for the comprehensive care of all the feeble-minded and epileptics of the State, viz.:

(a) Medical inspection of school children is now required in every school district. (Chap. 92 of laws 1909.) The medical inspection should go farther than merely to detect contagion, sanitary conditions, etc. Eye, ear, nose, throat and teeth should be carefully examined and all remediable conditions corrected.

(b) The primary children of every school district should be examined by the Binet Measuring Scale of Intelligence or something equally effective, and as soon as possible a method should be adopted which shall be uniform throughout the State.

(c) In every school district in which there are ten or more children who are four or more years behind grade there should be established special classes. (This has been accomplished, Chapter 234, laws of 1911.)

(d) Backward and feeble-minded children should be placed in such special classes as long as it is safe to keep them in their homes, and the training should be largely industrial and manual. This will relieve the State and the community of a great deal of the expense of their maintenance.

(e) All feeble-minded children of every grade (including morons, imbeciles and idiots) who cannot properly be kept in their homes and sent to the special classes should be sent to the Training School at Vineland, where in so far as possible they should be trained for the lives they will live when they become men and women in years.

(f) All feeble-minded women of every grade (including morons, imbeciles and idiots) should be provided for at the State Institution for Feeble-Minded Women, where they shall find proper care and be given such profitable occupations as they are able to follow, such as small fruit and poultry raising, gardening and floriculture in summer, and needlework of various kinds, the weaving of stockings, underwear, carpets and rugs in winter; supplying not only their own needs, but also those of other wards of the State.

(g) All feeble-minded men of every grade (including morons, imbeciles and idiots) should be provided for at the State Village at Skillman, where they shall have proper care and be given such profitable occupations as they are able to follow, such as farming and even manufacturing on a small scale.

(h) All of the epileptics of every age and grade should be cared for at the State Village at Skillman, where there should be every facility for their scientific study, care, treatment and occupation.

(i) The scientific departments at the State Institution for Women and the Epileptic Village should have every encouragement, for the time for mere custody is past. This is the day of preventive measures, and nowhere is there such an opportunity to study means of prevention as in the institutions themselves.

Every public institution should be a laboratory for the study of its problems.