

PAS 1974

The U. S. Dept of Health, Education & Welfare National Institute of Mental Health publishes a bulletin entitled "Schizophrenia".

The following is an excerpt from the editors introduction to the Fall 1974 bulletin:

"It is the families of schizophrenics who have been most dramatically affected by the community treatment movement. Suddenly asked by the mental health community to take on at least partial responsibility for the care of a mentally ill relative, these families all too seldom receive meaningful help in assuming the responsibilities that have been thrust upon them. Their situation is a troubling one, inherently more conflicted than that of persons without ill relatives. They may feel guilty, ashamed, or responsible for their relative's illness. Their emotional ties to the person make it difficult for them to be objective in their dealings with him. If greater attention is not paid by the mental health community to the needs, wishes, and fears of the families of the mentally ill, serious long-term difficulties for the community psychiatry movement will very likely result."

The members of our organization have found the above to be true. We have a lot of difficulty getting any help when we have a problem. In our County the therapeutic approach is to encourage alienation from the family, making it more difficult to cope when the problem of dealing with the mentally ill person is thrust upon us, after all other avenues are exhausted.

Parents of Adult Schizophrenics
San Mateo County

One of our members tells her story:

"My reaction as a parent: If I take responsibility and help with these problems, I am considered an over-protective parent.

If I try to separate out and let the chips fall where they may; emergency room, jail, hospital, discharge when ill and told not to let him come home but make his own plans, I am considered rejecting.

When he is in the hospital, and discharged too soon. . . .I am told to let him make his own way and be more responsible.

If sending the mentally ill home to their own community is best, and the state hospital is closing down in order to force this issue by not keeping enough beds, WHERE are these local facilities for care?

Has the state decided that mental illness no longer exists? Care is geared to the more well, cooperative patient. The street becomes the home of the really ill person. Street and jail.

I will probably be told next that my only alternative is to put my son out on the street. In the meantime, he is home and it is most unsatisfactory for all concerned.

What are a parents alternatives? Any?

I feel that closing down the state hospitals has not placed the responsibility back on the community at the local level. It has placed it back on the parent.

If I am wrong, show me! Oh yes, the doctor who was assigned to my son today by the social worker is the same one who discharged him from Peninsula Hospital originally for being uncooperative. I do not blame him. He simply says, "Our facility is not geared to caring for people like your son". And he is right. It is a beautiful hospital. But where does this leave me? We have gone the full circle and we have no answers. None!

As we start the circle over again, can it be any different? How?"