

OFFICE OF COUNTY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

AND

BUREAU OF EFFICIENCY

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July 16, 1928.

Hon. Board of Supervisors,
Building.

SUBJECT: PSYCHOPATHIC SITUATION IN THE
STATE OF CALIFORNIA AS IT AFFECTS
LOS ANGELES COUNTY.

Gentlemen:

While investigating the psychopathic situation generally, we discovered a phase of it which vitally affects Los Angeles County. In order clearly to understand this, it is necessary briefly to review the State Law which treats of the care of insane persons, as follows:

There are established the following State Hospitals for the insane:

Agnews, Mendocino, Napa and Stockton in the northern part of the State; Norwalk and Patton in the southern part of the State.

When a person is placed under arrest as being alleged insane, he must be taken before a judge of the superior court for a hearing and examination on such charge. The judge must compel the attendance of at least two medical examiners who must hear the testimony of all witnesses, make a personal examination of the alleged insane person and testify before the judge as to the result of such examination.

If the medical examiners believe such person to be dangerously insane, they must so certify. The judge, after such examination and certificate made, if he believes the person so far disordered in his mind as to endanger health, person or property, must adjudge him insane and make an order that he be confined in a hospital for the care and treatment of the insane, designated in such order.

No case of idiocy, imbecility, epilepsy, harmless chronic mental unsoundness, feeble-mindedness or acute mania a potu, as such, shall be committed to or confined in any state hospital for the insane.

The superintendent of a state hospital may discharge any patient, at any time, as follows:

A patient who, in his judgment, has recovered;

Any patient who is not recovered, but whose discharge in the judgment of the superintendent, will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the patient;

Any person who is not insane, or because he is not a proper case for treatment therein, or because such patient is a case

of idiocy, imbecility, chronic harmless mental unsoundness or acute mania a potu.

Such person, when discharged, shall be returned to the county from which he was committed, at the expense of said county. When such person is a poor and indigent person, he shall be cared for by such county as are other indigent poor.

Los Angeles County is the only County in the State which has created the position of psychopathic parole officer.

There is a psychopathic ward at the County Farm which has an average population of 550 patients.

The annual cost to the County for keeping psychopathic court wards is as follows:

Salaries for psychopathic parole department,	\$12,450.00
Other expenses, including board and care of indigents, etc.	109,508.76
Psychopathic Ward at Farm	<u>226,847.50</u>
Total, ...	\$348,806.26

While none of the other seven southern counties have created the position of psychopathic parole officer, each of them maintains a farm or similar institution where mild mental cases, not supposed to be sent to state hospitals, are cared for.

However, in the northern part of the State an entirely different situation prevails. In the fifty counties north of the Tehachapi all psychopathic wards of the Court, with very few exceptions, are sent to state hospitals. This is made possible by the fact that the two hospitals for the insane in Southern California contain only one bed for every 212.3 voters registered in the eight southern counties while the four hospitals in northern California provide one bed for every 96.8 voters registered in the fifty northern counties. That is to say, northern California is provided with more than twice the hospital accommodations for insane patients that southern California is provided with.

All of the state hospitals for the insane are crowded and new patients are being cared for only through emergency arrangements.

The state law, previously quoted, provides that the superintendent of a state hospital may discharge any patient for any one of several specific reasons or "because he is not a proper case for treatment therein".

It is thus possible for the superintendent of one hospital to retain types of patients which the superintendent of another hospital may legally dismiss and this is exactly what has been taking place.

As a result, Los Angeles County not only pays its proportionate share of the cost of maintaining state hospitals but in addition spends approximately \$350,000.00 annually caring for certain types of psychopathic cases while northern counties are sending all their patients to state hospitals and spending nothing for the care of mental patients.

Because of the crowded condition of the state hospitals and because of the provisions of the law, it is not at present possible for Los Angeles County to compel the State to accept the patients which the County is now supporting.

Patton State Hospital is not being enlarged but Norwalk State Hospital is, at the rate of 200 beds per year. However, this simply takes care of the natural increase and will never relieve the present situation.

SUGGESTED REMEDIES FOR THIS SITUATION

- I. Capacity of hospitals for the insane in southern California should be more than doubled.
- II. State Lunacy Law should be amended to provide a clear and definite line of demarcation between those patients which are to be cared for by the State and those by the Counties.
- III. Request the Judge of the Psychopathic Court to commit patients to hospitals in the northern part of the State.
- IV. Secure the cooperation and united efforts of the eight southern counties in accomplishing these things.

Respectfully submitted,

BUREAU OF EFFICIENCY,

By

Amy J. Chappel
Secretary

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