Victims of Change

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The Retarded

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A series of articles
reprinted from the
Cincinnati Enquirer

American Federation of State, County
and Municipal Employees

Cover photograph: Pam Parlapiano

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The bag lady sleeping in the office entrance. The homeless stretched across heating vents on the sidewalk. The senior citizen wandering aimlessly down the street. Many of these people are victims of a process called deinstitutionalization.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's a wave of reform swept the mental health and mental retardation professions. Public policymakers sought to upgrade care for the mentally ill and mentally retarded by closing institutions. To make it less remote, less impersonal, and more community-oriented. But, as the process evolved, the fiscal benefits of arbitrarily shrinking the number of state institutional residents soon began to overshadow human and professional considerations.

Residents were turned out of institutions, and the community-based facilities designed to replace them simply could not provide the same level of care. Worse yet, private profiteers often entered the burgeoning industry. For-profit corporations "bid" for former residents and their state and federal benefits, yet they frequently provided little or no direct care. All too often, community facilities became a turnstile operation for deinstitutionalized mentally ill and mentally retarded residents. Their next stop was the streets.

Recently, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* published a penetrating look at the thousands of mentally retarded residents in Ohio who have been deinstitutionalized. Their story could have been written in many other states which have tried the same process.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) represents more than 300,000 members employed in health services, 200,000 in facilities for the mentally ill and mentally retarded.

Few individuals better understand the plight of deinstitutionalized residents than AFSCME professionals and direct care staff. For this reason, AFSCME has for years been one of the only voices speaking out against the failed deinstitutionalization process. At the heart of this process has been the mistaken belief that for-profit and non-profit private providers would develop a quality delivery system. It didn't work out that way. A tragedy has occurred.

The *Enquirer* articles reprinted in this booklet document resident neglect—and worse. AFSCME, and a growing number of critics, have concluded that the process of deinstitutionalization must be halted. It's time for a balanced, realistic analysis of the problem. Government cannot continue to shirk its responsibilities to its most vulnerable citizens. It must provide a full range of public services to the mentally ill and the mentally retarded. AFSCME, and dedicated public employees everywhere, will continue to do everything they can to see to it that the mentally ill and the mentally retarded get all the public services they need.

Gerald W. McEntee
International President
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

Ohio's Retarded: Victims Of Change

By Karen Garloch

Move From Institutions Comes Under Attack As Problems Crop Up In New Group Homes

The mentally retarded are your neighbors now.

In increasing numbers, they have left Ohio's institutions and moved back to the community, where they could lead more "normal" lives. But whether their new lives are better depends on where you look.

Take Patty. For years, she lived with hundreds of other mentally retarded people in the confines of Orient State Hospital, near Columbus.

Then came a dramatic shift. Faced with complaints of abuse and neglect and a court order to shape up, Orient finally gave way to group homes and developmental centers, scattered throughout Ohio.

The mentally retarded are your neighbors now. In increasing numbers, they have left Ohio's institutions and moved back to the community, where they could lead more "normal" lives. But whether their new lives are better depends on where you look.

The transition was tragic for Patty, who moved to a 126-bed center in Batavia, not as large as Orient, but not as small as a group home.

She suffered from a condition called pica, an eating abnormality. Not uncommon in people with mental retardation, pica causes people to crave unusual things, even substances not fit for human consumption.

Last March, Patty choked to death at the Batavia center after trying to swallow a plastic jelly container, the kind served with toast in restaurants.

A nurse who worked there said Patty's death could have been prevented, if only she had not been left alone to scrounge through the kitchen garbage.

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LIFE HASN'T been so good for two women on Glenway Avenue in Westwood, either.

They live in a group home, one of many that have sprouted quietly outside the glare of publicity that followed others, where neighbors put up zoning fights and lawsuits.

Monthly payments from the state of Ohio to the Glenway home are meant to cover every necessity—from food and clothing for the residents to salaries and rent for the agency now charged with their care.

Still, the women of Glenway sometimes go hungry. For several months, one family brought food on a regular basis, feeling that what was provided was inadequate. The relatives kept tabs. On six visits in May and June, they said there was no food in the house. One day in June, they found lunch was only celery, carrots and crackers.

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Reprinted from *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 30, 1984

State Moved Mentally Retarded Too Quickly, Critics Say

There is also Richard, who lives at another intermediate center, Montgomery Developmental Center, near Dayton, Ohio. His need for sensitive care is great. He is incontinent.

Richard was treated by a doctor last February for second-degree burns that had little to do with his retardation. An employee responsible for Richard's care had cleaned him up—a necessary, if unpleasant task—by hosing him off with water so hot that it burned Richard's thigh.

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Care for the mentally retarded, even today, is not always loving care.

An *Enquirer* investigation of the state's move from institutions to community homes determined that the Department of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities often has displayed a callous disregard for the needs of the retarded.

Decision-making is riddled with favoritism and politics, according to professionals in the field of mental retardation and advocates for the retarded.

"I have never seen the kind of political involvement that you have seen this past year," said Barbara Johnson, a Cincinnati mother of a 19-year-old retarded son and former chairman of the Citizens Advisory Board for Orient.

PEOPLE IN the political know have joined the department or were recruited to start group-home businesses. Some had no background or experience with mental retardation.

State officials expedited the opening of new homes to meet a deadline for closing Orient because the legislature wanted to turn it into a prison. But the same attention was not given to making sure the bounty of new homes for the retarded would have trained employees with caring attitudes.

For example, two new homes opened side-by-side on Sandhurst Drive in Groesbeck on the same day in September, 1983. They were home to 16 former institution residents.

Within four days, four of them were in the hospital, one with a drug overdose because the staff was not trained to give medication.

Subsequently, the state's own review admitted that the homes' staffs were "not able to provide [even] basic custodial care," let alone specialized care.

Decision-making is riddled with favoritism and politics, according to professionals in the field of mental retardation and advocates for the retarded.

ALSO, A new agency, Meridian Community Care Inc.—a minority-owned firm recruited by the department—opened 10 homes in five months while established group-home operators refused to open more than one or two at a time, to ensure quality of care.

Meridian's applications for development sailed through the bureaucratic maze in three days, far more quickly than most, according to other group-home operators.

Furthermore, the corporation that owns Meridian's 10 houses—N&J Care Inc.—was the only private concern to receive a grant from the mental retardation department to open group homes last year, according to the state. Other more experienced group-home operators in southwest Ohio said they were told there was no capital money available.

The original chairman of N&J Care was William Cargile III, a black Cincinnati contractor and a supporter of state senators William F. Bowen and Stanley Aronoff, who, as members of the State Controlling Board, voted in favor of state expenditures that benefited Cargile.

BOWEN HAS taken more than a passing interest in the growing group-home business, seeing it as one more way to encourage the growth of minority businesses in the state.

The* Enquirer's *investigation also showed that Ohio's oversight of the retarded is inadequate to ensure their well-being.

Last year, he and department officials together called a meeting of blacks from Cincinnati and Dayton to explain the program and encourage them to get involved. Cargile was in that group.

The *Enquirer*'s investigation also showed that Ohio's oversight of the retarded is inadequate to ensure their well-being.

With homes for the retarded sprouting up in urban neighborhoods and rural towns across the state, the need to keep watch over them is greater than ever. In institutions, for better or worse, residents are all in one place, but when they are scattered, keeping track of them is more difficult.

Instead of enlarging the monitoring staff in tandem with the growing network of homes, the department loaded more responsibility on its case managers. Instead of visiting homes regularly to keep in touch with residents about potential problems, case managers can be little more than troubleshooters, reacting to problems after they develop instead of preventing them.

They are too overloaded with work to visit every home even once a year to check the most basic things: Is dinner served? Are smoke detectors working? Are people happy?

INSPECTORS IN charge of licensing, too, are overburdened.

Last year, annual licenses went unrenewed on about 90 group homes in Hamilton County because inspectors had not had time to make visits. In the meantime, a fire killed six mentally retarded men in a North Avondale group home.

Then, concerned about fire safety, the department caught up on licenses by deploying inspectors from other parts of Ohio. Some made triple the number of inspections normal for a week.

In light of all this, many mental retardation professionals and so-called advocates for the retarded see their long-time dream of "deinstitutionalization" turning into a nightmare.

One of those inspectors was enraged when, only 10 days after the fire, he found batteries missing from smoke detectors at two Cincinnati group homes.

In light of all this, many mental retardation professionals and so-called advocates for the retarded see their long-time dream of "deinstitutionalization" turning into a nightmare.

"It's very scary," said Mary Kirchner, a lawyer for the Ohio Legal Rights Service, a watchdog agency for the mentally handicapped. "All these people are out there, and nobody's checking up on them."

Another advocate, Joan Thompson, chairman of the Citizens Advisory Board of the state-run Montgomery Developmental Center, said: "For 10 years, I've fought to close these places [institutions]. . . . But for God's sake, let's do it right. Let's go slow. Let's think of the clients first."

Department director Minnie Johnson says that is exactly what she was doing when she closed Orient.

"We were thinking of clients first when we decided to get them out of Orient," Johnson said.

She denied that her decisions have been motivated by politics or void of concern for the retarded. "I believe that the quality of services for the mentally retarded has been greatly improved," she said.

By improving management of staff time, Johnson said, she has actually "beefed up" the state's monitoring system. But she added: "I'll never be boxed in to say that I have enough staff or anything. The minute you say that, some catastrophe occurs.

After years of moving toward deinstitutionalization, Johnson emphasizes that it was *her* administration that finally got the job done with Orient.

"She does deserve praise," said Wade Hitzing, director of the Ohio Society for Autistic Children and a critic of the department. "What she's doing is what we advocates have asked for. She shut down Orient, and it was a snake pit."

But he and others still disagree about how it was done. How people took a back seat to politics.

"It's not the change, it's the way it was done," complained Thompson, of the Montgomery citizens group.

Official Defends State's Action

Minnie Johnson has faced a barrage of criticism during her year and a half as the department head responsible for Ohio's mentally retarded.

Most of it comes from professionals in the field of mental retardation and so-called advocates—mostly private individuals, including parents, who speak out on behalf of the retarded.

Their complaints center on the speed with which Johnson closed Orient Developmental Center, the state's century-old, 1,500-bed institution for the mentally retarded, and opened new group homes in southwestern Ohio. They complain, too, that the state's system of ensuring good quality in community homes is inadequate.

A confident woman, Johnson fields the criticism eloquently, with a touch of exasperation and defensiveness.

"ADVOCATES JUST advocate," she said. "They don't have to make decisions. They don't have to live within reality . . . I have to deal with the way it is."

The way it was last year was that Johnson's Department of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities had set a deadline of December 31, 1983, to close Orient.

At the same time, another state department was waiting to convert Orient to a prison.

With that, the rush was on to open enough community homes to take the people who would be leaving Orient. Advocates called the deadline impractical.

Johnson agrees that "it was horrendous."

"Even though my body was exhausted and I had to deliver an incredible thing, I felt that I was doing the right thing and that it was in the best interest of that population," she said.

ADVOCATES AND professionals complained that homes were opened too quickly for their staffs to be trained.

In its successful request for a court order to delay Orient's closing, Ohio Legal Rights Service charged the department with "dumping" 16 retarded people into two new homes in Cincinnati on the same day. Before a week was out, four of them were in the hospital, one with an overdose of drugs.

Legal Rights, a watchdog agency for the mentally handicapped, and other advocates now worry that retarded residents are not being cared for properly and that the state's system of monitoring that care is haphazard and inadequate.

Legal Rights, a watchdog agency for the mentally handicapped, and other advocates now worry that retarded residents are not being cared for properly and that the state's system of monitoring that care is haphazard and inadequate.

To the contrary, Johnson said, "I have beefed up and intensified that review."

HOWEVER, SHE is not referring to an infusion of new money or new employees for monitoring. Instead, she said, she improved the management of the employees she had.

When there was a backlog in the annual renewal of group-home licenses in southwest Ohio last December, Johnson said she pulled together a "special team" of inspectors from across the state to bring this area "up to snuff."

"We don't have to do everything by increasing numbers," she said. "You just can't go and pluck money off a tree. We have to just get smarter and better at what we're doing.

"There's more watching that goes on in a community setting than in an institution. There is never enough when you start talking about human services. It's an insatiable need," Johnson said.

HOWEVER, KNOWING that the *Enquirer* reviewed department files containing sometimes-critical, public reports on group-home inspections, Johnson cited those reports as evidence that "the state is doing its job."

"I respond whenever something is brought to my attention. I can say that I am very good at that," Johnson said. "I can also say that my staff responds to me, they take me seriously. That does not mean that I'm perfect or that I know everything, but I believe that the quality of services for the mentally retarded has been greatly improved based on our budget, the kinds of things we've done . . . to support our community effort and based on the kind of awareness and education that is going on."

About criticism that some of her top appointments were made for political reasons rather than for their experience in mental retardation, she is adamant.

"**I THINK** they're being political when they raise those charges," she said.

"That's the charge that they made about me as well, that I was not an MR [mental retardation] person. What is an MR person? Now, I've been a school teacher. Just because I hadn't run a developmental center [for the retarded] or something like that."

Johnson came to her job after directing the welfare departments in Broward County, Fla., and in Montgomery County, Ohio.

Two of the department appointments cited when critics complain of politics are the Rev. Charles Winburn, overseer of residential development for the retarded, and Freddie Williams, superintendent of the

state-run Montgomery Developmental Center, near Dayton.

Winburn was Hamilton County coordinator for Democratic Ohio Gov. Richard Celeste's 1982 campaign, and Williams came to his job with a recommendation from State Rep. C. J. McLin, D-Dayton.

JOHNSON DEFENDED their appointments.

"Fred Williams was an educator [in Dayton] and was the Teacher of the Year," she said. "Most of my people, professionals, are teachers and have education degrees."

Winburn, who also is pastor of the Allen Chapel A.M.E. church in Cincinnati, previously worked for the Community Chest and Council of the Cincinnati Area, for the Cincinnati Public Schools and on the staff of U.S. Rep. Thomas Luken, D-Cincinnati.

Suit, Deadlines Pushed Change

Barbara C. was 6 years old when her father committed her to Orient State Hospital for the mentally retarded near Columbus.

When she was 24, her name (with her last initial only) became synonymous with a class-action lawsuit attacking the state for letting Orient residents live under "overcrowded and unsafe conditions" in a "warehouse of human beings."

For years, Barbara C. was almost constantly kept in restraints, in part due to lack of staff, the lawsuit claimed. Barbara's physical abilities, such as her ability to walk, deteriorated.

THE SUIT was filed in 1977 by Ohio Legal Rights Service, a state and federally funded legal advocacy group for the mentally disabled. It led finally to the closing of Orient last spring.

The Barbara C. suit charged that the state deprived Orient residents of basic rights—education and vocational rehabilitation services, recreation, a safe physical environment and meaningful contact with the general population.

Four years later, in October, 1981, U.S. District Court Judge Joseph P. Kinneary agreed with Legal Rights. In addition to requiring staff increases and better living conditions, he ordered the state to reduce the population of Orient.

The department agreed to a "plan for relief" to reduce the Orient population from 1,500 to not more than 575 persons by October, 1985.

As Barbara C. class members moved out of Orient, the agreed-upon plan called for the state to provide adequate evaluation, monitoring and programming to ensure an improvement in the quality of life.

IN THE years after that order, Orient residents moved out as group homes and developmental centers opened. It was a slow, deliberate process. Until 1983, when Democratic Gov. Richard Celeste took office and named Minnie Johnson to head the Department of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities. Then, bureaucratic machinery began to move quickly.

About the same time, Ohio legislators approved plans to turn Orient into a prison. With pressure for the new prison, the Celeste administration moved up the deadline for emptying Orient to December 31, 1983.

In the 18 months before the decision, 606 people had left Orient for the community; the new deadline meant moving 784 people in only nine months.

It would bring the Orient population to zero almost a full year before the "plan for relief" had called for a reduction to 575.

THE ABRUPT change meant that communities like Hamilton County needed to open a lot of homes quickly to accommodate the escalating rate of Orient transfers.

There were problems. The inexperience of new group-home providers, coupled with budget cutbacks at the state level and turnover in personnel under the new ad-

ministration, caused parents of and advocates for the retarded to worry about quality of care.

Finally, in early December, 1983, Legal Rights stepped in again, asking Judge Kinneary to stop the state from "dumping" Orient residents into ill-prepared community facilities to meet the December 31 deadline.

In her briefs to the U.S. District Court, Legal Rights attorney Mary Kirchner outlined the "far-too-rapid" development of residential facilities and inadequate "follow-along" services to assure proper care and programs for residents.

Kinneary agreed with Legal Rights, and the December 31 closing was delayed.

Thereafter, people transferred out of Orient only after consultations among the judge, state mental retardation officials and Kirchner. The last Orient resident finally moved out April 12.

The Orient campus, south of Columbus, is now a prison.

Barbara C. is living in another state institution.

State Monitoring Weak In Overloaded System

Case managers are the people assigned by the state of Ohio to visit the mentally retarded to make sure they are okay.

But in Southwest Ohio, retarded people sometimes do not see their case managers even once a year.

Meanwhile, life goes on. Good or bad.

If people in a group home do not get meals or clothes, do not get medicine or get too much, the problems can go unnoticed for too long.

"It's very scary," said Mary Kirchner, a lawyer for Ohio Legal Rights Service. "All these people are out there [in the community], and nobody's checking up on them."

LEGAL RIGHTS is the legal watchdog agency that filed the 1977 class-action suit that eventually led this spring to the closing of Orient Developmental Center, near Columbus. The same agency is charged with making sure the state lives up to the court's order to improve the care of people who left Orient.

Complaints about that care—from lack of food to sexual abuse—come in frequently to Kirchner's Columbus office. She contends the state has too few case managers to monitor the growing number of community homes.

However, Loyce Scott, the supervisor of case managers for Ohio's Department of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities, said the state does plenty of monitoring, especially when you count the work of social workers and other professionals, hired by group-home operators, who work with residents in their community homes.

If people in a group home do not get meals or clothes, do not get medicine or get too much, the problems can go unnoticed for too long.

THOSE PROFESSIONALS assist state-employed case managers in monitoring and reporting to the state when there are any problems for the retarded, Scott said.

But, relying on group-home employees to report problems is unrealistic, Kirchner said; monitors must be independent.

"Let's talk about the surprise visits, the checkups for abuse," she said. "You certainly can't have the people in the homes

doing it. . . . They're not going to blow the whistle."

Last December, Kirchner took the state to federal court, charging that the state was "dumping" Orient residents into residential homes too quickly and without proper preparation.

Federal Judge John P. Kinneary agreed with Legal Rights and delayed the closing of Orient. Kirchner's contention, then and now, was that the state's monitoring system was inadequate.

At that hearing, Scott testified that each of the state's case managers was assigned an average of 250 retarded people.

FRANCIS KELLEY, an expert witness for Legal Rights and a mental retardation professional from Massachusetts, countered that "250 is too high." He said the average should be between 75 and 100 per supervisor.

Since then, Scott told the *Enquirer* that the state has hired more case managers, so that the ratio of case managers to the retarded is 1 to 180. "That is still not an excessive load," she said.

In December, the 18-county southwest Ohio region had eight case managers, she said, and it now has 10, with two more to be hired.

Unable to recall the total number of case managers in Ohio, Scott referred the question to the department's public information office, where the numbers added up differently.

A spokeswoman there said the southwest Ohio region has five case managers to cover 3,000 mentally retarded people. That is a ratio of 1 to 600.

According to the public information office, the state has a total of 34 case managers to monitor 9,499 retarded people in the state. That's a ratio of 1 to 279.

SCOTT SAID case managers are required to make quarterly visits to state-funded group homes.

However, experienced group-home operators say case managers rarely visit every home once a year.

Brenda Whitney, executive director of the Resident Home Association for the Mentally Retarded of Greater Dayton, Inc., said case managers visit "maybe once a year."

"As the department opened more [homes] and closed institutions, they [case managers] became really nothing more than troubleshooters. That's about all they can do. As the system's gotten larger, they haven't added people," Whitney said.

Whitney's association, which operates seven group homes for 56 people, employs two full-time social workers who also monitor the residents.

"But these are my employees," said Whitney, "and they should be monitored too."

KAREN BURR, program coordinator for Ohio Valley Residential Services, which operates group homes and apartments in Hamilton County, said the case manager assigned to her homes visits when a new resident arrives and then tries to follow up in a month. But she said he did not visit all of Ohio Valley's homes last year.

"There's just about two or three [case managers] over at the local field office [at Rollman Psychiatric Institute], and they're really swamped," she said.

Leaving Orient Was Painful For Some Residents

To Patty and Leslie, leaving Orient Developmental Center for the mentally retarded was not the dream that adults with higher intelligence promised.

Instead of finding a new community home that could provide a happy, more normal life, they found pain and, for Patty, death.

◇ Patty choked to death last February when she tried to swallow a plastic jelly container from the kitchen garbage at the 126-bed Batavia Developmental Center. A former nurse there said any professional familiar with Patty's eating disorder, which made her crave inedible objects, would never have allowed her to venture into the kitchen alone.

◇ Leslie, 31, lived at the same center where, her father alleges, she was raped by a staff member or another resident April 1. She and her parents have sued the center's operator, New Horizons Habilitation Homes, a minority-owned firm from Toledo, for $7 million. In the meantime, she moved to a smaller group home in Lebanon.

LIKE MOST of Ohio's retarded citizens, Patty and Leslie settled for what they could get from the state's huge system for housing and caring for the mentally retarded.

Once, they lived in Orient, the state's oldest and largest institution for the retarded. Then, when state officials closed Orient—as the result of a court order mandating improved conditions—Patty and Leslie went where they were moved.

Unable to speak up for themselves, they relied on the good will of public officials, of those in control. They had no choice.

But they, and others, were let down.

Pearl Smith, a former nursing supervisor at the Batavia center, believes Patty's death was "avoidable."

Although she was not on duty the Saturday of the incident, Smith said a nurse called her immediately to report what happened. She said professionals should have been aware of Patty's eating disorder, called pica, which gave her unusual cravings.

"ALL PICA residents have to be watched," Smith said. In April, Smith wrote a letter to Gov. Richard Celeste, claiming that Patty's death was due to "gross neglect" and asking for an investigation. She said she received a reply in May from Minnie Johnson, director of the Department of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities, saying that her charges would be checked.

Department spokesman Jim Bruney said there is no investigation report.

New Horizons' attorney Lawrence Winkfield declined to discuss the incident. "We have a policy at New Horizons not to discuss internal operations about the center with the newspaper."

The same center is under investigation by the Clermont County sheriff's office over the complaint filed by Leslie's father that she was raped. He said Cincinnati doctors treating her for rectal fissure recently discovered she also has a venereal disease.

WINKFIELD, A board member of New Horizons, denied the allegations, saying that the woman "has a history of all kinds of problems."

New Horizons also faces a lawsuit by the former Citizens Advisory Board, which lost the bid to operate the center.

The board's suit said New Horizons did not have the experience, required by the state's invitation-to-bid, to operate the 126-bed developmental center. The state awarded the contract to New Horizons in November, 1983.

In testimony before the court, Winkfield said New Horizons, which has three group homes in Toledo, had never run a Medicaid-certified facility, but he said the agency has applied for that designation.

John Woliver, the attorney representing both the citizens board and Leslie's parents, said he understands the department's desire to "get minority groups into operating these facilities ... but I still think the state should follow its own rules."

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MINNIE JOHNSON, the top state mental retardation official, believes the retarded are better off now than ever before.

Johnson, who is director of the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities, said retarded people, just by moving out of institutions and into the neighborhoods, are living better.

Case managers—whose job it is to monitor the care of the retarded people assigned to them—are too overloaded with work to be making surprise visits and making sure people are happy and healthy, she said.

With more people watching them—from neighbors and school bus drivers to doctors and grocery store clerks—there is a better chance someone will notice when something is awry, she said.

She may be right about some.

However, Mary Kirchner, a lawyer for Ohio Legal Rights Service, a watchdog agency for the mentally handicapped, argues that the state should be checking inside these homes more often.

Case managers—whose job it is to monitor the care of the retarded people assigned to them—are too overloaded with work to be making surprise visits and making sure people are happy and healthy, she said.

IT ISN'T enough for the state to "happen to find out" about problems, Kirchner said.

That is exactly how the state learned about problems at a Glenway Avenue home this summer and about families who said their retarded relatives go without food, sleep on urine-soaked beds, wear dirty or ill-fitting clothes and don't see the little bit of personal Social Security money they are entitled to spend any way they want.

Relatives of two women at that home got fed up with the lack of attention they received from the group-home operator, Ohio Residential Services. So they took the problems to the Hamilton County chapter of the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC), part of a statewide network of advocates who speak for the mentally retarded.

In June, ARC officials sent a strongly worded letter to the state, asking for an investigation.

". . . We are very, very concerned that substandard care may now be common practice."

F Stephen Schnabl,
executive director,
Welcome Home project

". . . WE ARE very, very concerned that substandard care may now be common practice," wrote F. Stephen Schnabl, executive director, and Meg Harman, coordinator of the Welcome Home project.

Even though the state pays Ohio Residential and other operators for expenses, such as food, relatives of the Glenway women said they regularly brought groceries.

They kept a record of their visits over the last year: Six times when they visited, there was no food in the house for lunch.

On June 13, one family brought the home $100 worth of groceries, including meat, vegetables, fruit, milk and eggs, wrote Schnabl and Harman. Three days later, they reported, a staff member ate grits, bacon and eggs for breakfast while the residents had cold cereal and milk. Lunch one day was celery, carrots and crackers, the ARC letter said.

But food wasn't the only source of complaints.

On three days in May and June, the women didn't have soap or toothpaste, the families complained. When families wanted to take them shopping, their personal money—about $25 a month from Supplemental Security Income—could not be accounted for. They didn't get routine medical and dental treatment. And the house was not kept clean.

BECAUSE THE conditions persisted so long without being noticed or corrected by the state, Schnabl and Harman questioned the "appropriateness of [the state's] staff assignments to monitor the homes."

Since sending the letter, Harman said one of the two women has left the home, and Harman hasn't checked to make sure all the complaints have been resolved. She added, though, that "the letter had the desired response."

Questions about those complaints could not be addressed to Geri Wright, executive director of Ohio Residential. She recently canceled two appointments with an *Enquirer* reporter and failed to return phone calls to discuss the complaints.

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PROBLEMS AT two of Wright's other Ohio Residential homes in Westwood were discovered last December when a state inspector, normally assigned to central Ohio, came to Hamilton County to help with a backlog of annual license renewals.

Inspections of existing homes had been allowed to slide because the department was concentrating on opening new homes to accommodate the people coming out of Orient.

But the combination of the December, 1983, fire that killed six men in a North Avondale group home and a court challenge from Legal Rights to stop "dumping" Orient residents into ill-prepared homes made state officials keenly aware of fire safety and the need for inspections.

Ten days after the fire, inspector Jim Estock was alarmed to find that residents of two homes on Glenmore Avenue and Westwood-Northern Boulevard would not have been warned of a fire: Batteries were gone from their smoke detectors.

ANOTHER INSPECTOR, Jim Seminara, followed up a week and a half later and found the batteries in place. Licenses were renewed.

But Estock found other problems, practices that belied a philosophy of group homes as a bridge to independent living.

At Glenmore, toilet tissue was kept in only one of the four apartments; residents had to ask for it from a supervisor. Also, only one of four kitchens was used for cooking meals.

Ohio Residential's Wright also operates 10 other group homes as executive director and president of Meridian Community Care Inc., a year-old, minority owned firm.

Meridian, too, has had complaints about a shortage of food.

For example, a citizen complaint last December prompted Cincinnati Health Department sanitarian Jocelyn Macy to visit a Meridian home on Teakwood Avenue in College Hill.

SHE WAS concerned to find no fresh vegetables and no fruits, except for two cans of applesauce and an orange. For lunch that day, five residents and a supervisor had 2 pounds of beef liver, mashed potatoes from a box and canned green beans.

Although the state reimburses group-home operators for the cost of food, Macy reported that various staff members "from time-to-time, provide supplemental food . . . from their own homes."

Subsequently, John Robinson, a former case manager for the mental retardation

department, made surprise visits to the Teakwood home and another Meridian home on Edwood Avenue, also in College Hill.

Robinson filed a report that Meridian "evidently needs much support in its nutrition and menu planning." He mentioned similar complaints about two other Meridian homes, on Greenland Place in Roselawn and Plantation Way in College Hill.

IN AN interview several months ago with the *Enquirer*, Wright scoffed at the food complaints.

"Food is a consumable item," she said. "If I buy groceries, which I do, on Wednesday, if you come on Tuesday, it's at the end of the week."

Still, state rules for licensure require: "Fresh food supplies sufficient for two days and staple food supplies sufficient for at least one week . . . at all times."

Seminara, the department's licensing official for southwest Ohio, said problems at the Meridian homes were corrected. Wright has been unavailable for comment on other questions.

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ESTOCK'S DECEMBER inspections in Cincinnati raised other questions about who's watching the retarded.

At a Queen City Avenue apartment run by Renaissance Apartment Placement Inc., he found food and fire-safety violations that left him outraged.

When he arrived, a staff member and one of the residents were waiting in the hallway for the second resident to come home with a key. In case someone had been trapped inside, the staff member would have been unable to help.

Once inside, Estock found the food supply "disgusting," he wrote in his report to the state.

His color snapshots of the refrigerator-freezer show a pile of plastic bags of what he described as "a disgusting array of quick-fix, bland, tasteless, colorless food."

ONE OF THE frozen entrees was "a package of three-ounce meat with a pattern similar to a tire tread embossed on it," he wrote. Although a staff member at the apartment said it was spare ribs without the bones, Estock wrote: "This product was a blended, shaped and formed product. It was not, however, spare ribs."

Estock recommended closing the apartment. But when Seminara, the local inspector, visited the place four months later, he found the "food supply was abundant." The license was renewed.

At a Queen City Avenue apartment run by Renaissance Apartment Placement Inc., he found food and fire-safety violations that left him outraged.

The key problem was addressed immediately after Estock's inspection. State files show that John Begala, a top department official, spoke to a Renaissance employee who "assured me that keys are now available to staff."

Elaine Zoutis, executive director of Renaissance, told the *Enquirer* recently that Estock was not fair in his evaluation of her homes. She said her homes had had some problems. However, she said she no longer buys the meat that Estock objected to and has hired a dietitian who finds "nothing wrong with the food we provide."

Bowen Aided Grant

By Karen Garloch

Recipient Gave To Campaign

State Sen. William F. Bowen, D-Cincinnati, directly participated in securing a large grant from the State of Ohio for a Cincinnati contractor to buy 10 group homes for the mentally retarded at the same time he was accepting campaign contributions from the contractor.

Critics say the $311,360 grant was made to William Cargile III in an atmosphere where the race of the applicants was more important than their expertise in caring for the retarded, and with other group home operators unaware that such grants were available. A related application to operate the homes moved at record speed for a bureaucracy that usually moves slowly.

One of the major beneficiaries was Geri Wright, the largest minority operator of group homes in Ohio. At the same time, some of the homes she operates in Cincinnati have been cited by state inspectors for fire safety violations and for not supplying adequate food to residents. One home has been criticized for uncleanliness and a lack of routine medical and dental care.

THE STATE grant to purchase the 10 Cincinnati group homes was approved by the State Controlling Board, with Bowen voting for it. The grant primarily aided two companies and two individuals. They are:

◇ Cargile, a prominent Cincinnati minority construction firm owner, who gave at least $1,150 in political contributions to Bowen. At the time of the grant Cargile was chairman of a corporation called N&J Care Inc., formed to buy the 10 Cincinnati homes. He is also a law client of and political contributor to State Sen. Stanley J. Aronoff, R-Cincinnati.

◇ Wright, a former employee of the State Department of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities, and president and executive director of Meridian Community Care Inc., which operates the 10 homes Cargile's firm bought. Wright also separately operates group homes in Cincinnati for Ohio Residential Services, a Cleveland-based company.

Campaign records indicate that Bowen personally profited from political supporters who were direct and indirect beneficiaries of the state grant.

THE GRANT also generated spinoff benefits for business associates of Bowen. It provided:

◇ Real estate fees to a firm from which Bowen received income.

◇ Rent to a building owner who also heads an insurance agency from which Bowen derives income.

◇ Real estate fees to a company which made contributions to Bowen campaign funds.

◇ Significant business for Cargile's construction firm.

Bowen maintained he was not aware that Cargile headed N&J Care or that Cargile had purchased 10 homes. He said he wasn't aware of the details of the grant approved by controlling board with his vote.

He acknowledged, however, that circumstances could present the appearance that his votes benefited some campaign supporters and business associates.

"I can see how someone would have some question about that," Bowen said. And, in retrospect, he said, he might have done something differently "because of the reflection it makes," he said.

Bowen Helped Blacks Obtain Group Homes

HERE IS a chronology of how the grant came about.

When the state began to push to close Orient Developmental Center, near Co-

Reprinted from *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 1, 1984

lumbus, Bowen was among the legislators and state officials who wanted to make sure that blacks got a share of the growing subsidy from the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities for group homes.

To that end, he and state mental retardation officials held meetings to which they invited area blacks who might be persuaded to open group homes.

Bowen, in an interview late last week, defended his efforts to recruit blacks for the group home program. "I make no bones about it," he said. "I'm concerned about black folks helping each other."

In preparation for one of meetings Bowen held, the Rev. Charles Winburn, a Cincinnati minister and chief of the bureau of residential services for the department, set out a strategy.

Winburn, Hamilton County minority coordinator for Democratic Gov. Richard Celeste's 1982 campaign, offered to pull together "a variety of key black leaders" to discuss the state group-home program.

ANN OGLETREE, a former department official who helped plan the gathering, said the criterion for selecting guests for that meeting was that "they were black."

She said "expertise was never mentioned."

Ogletree, who is black, became so disgruntled with the department's focus on race that she chose not to attend a June 18, 1983, meeting at the Allen Temple A.M.E. church in Cincinnati.

Some who did attend said Bowen welcomed the guests, and department officials gave an explanation of how to apply to operate group homes and how operators are licensed and Cargile attended, although he insists that Bowen "didn't have anything to do with" his getting into the business.

Four months after the meeting, Cargile, through the new corporation called N&J Care, purchased the 10 houses in Cincinnati that became group homes.

During October and November, 1983, Cargile's N&J Care bought the houses. To help with the purchase, the department of mental retardation gave him the $311,360 capital grant, financial help that other, established group-home operators were told was unavailable.

THAT GRANT was approved by the controlling board on October 11, 1983. Bowen, a member of the board, voted for it. He also voted for a separate appropriation in December to Meridian Community Care, the firm headed by Wright which leased the houses from N&J Care. Part of that appropriation was for rent that went to N&J Care.

By most standards, Meridian's initial application to operate the homes slid through the system at lightning speed.

According to state records, Wright signed her application form August 9,1983; it was received by the department August 10; and it was approved by Department Director Minnie Johnson August 11.

"That's certainly quicker than any experience I've ever had," said Michael DeFrancesco, executive director of Ohio Valley Residential Services, which operates group homes and apartments for the mentally retarded at more than 20 sites in Hamilton County.

DeFrancesco and others had submitted applications earlier and received approval much later than Meridian's.

"IT IS what it is. Favoritism," DeFrancesco said. "All of the resources of the department were allocated to minority developers."

About the same time Cargile bought the houses, Bowen received political contributions from Cargile and also from Edward E. Jacobs Realty, a Springfield Township firm that helped Cargile find most of the 10 houses.

A week before N&J Care bought the homes, Cargile's contracting company, William Cargile Contractors Inc., West End, made a $1,000 contribution to Bowen's campaign fund against the state income tax repeal issues on last fall's ballot.

Cargile's contribution, one of the largest in the campaign called the Bowen Opera-

tion, was dated October 14, 1983, a week before he closed on the purchase of nine of the 10 group homes.

Then, on October 28, a week after the houses were sold, Jacobs Realty made a $1,000 contribution to the "Bowen Operation."

Jacobs, who handled seven of the purchases as the agent for Cargile, also gave $100 on September 18, 1983, to a Bowen political action committee (PAC) called "Salute to the Chairman."

OUT OF those two political funds, Bowen paid himself $22,500 in consulting fees and honorariums.

Out of the "Bowen Operation," Bowen paid himself consulting fees of $2,500. And Bowen paid himself $20,000, listed as "honorarium," from the "Salute to the Chairman" campaign, which raised $54,000 last year.

That was in addition to his $24,000 salary as state senator and finance committee chairman. He also makes about $3,000 a year as a member of the controlling board.

His latest financial disclosure form filed with the Ohio Senate Clerk shows he received income from Bill Bowen Consultant, Bill Bowen General Insurance, William F. and Dolores Bowen, Parker J. Lillie Insurance and Ben J. Allen Realty.

BEN J. Allen Realty, of Corryville, indirectly benefited from the state grant by handling one of Cargile's house purchases.

In the purchase of a house at 6645 Plantation Way, College Hill, two firms—Ben J. Allen for the buyer and Signature Realty for the seller—shared the customary 7% real estate commission. Of that, the Ben J. Allen firm received 3% of the $89,500 purchase price, or $2,685.

Allen, sole owner of the real estate firm, said Bowen had nothing to do with the Cargile purchase and received no commission for it. He said the senator is a part-time agent for his firm and makes money only when he sells or lists a property. Allen said Bowen had no sales in 1983 and only two this year. "He definitely was not involved in that in any way," Allen said.

Parker J. Lillie Insurance also indirectly profited from Cargile's group home purchases.

Meridian Community Care, the operator of the homes, located its administrative offices at 411 Oak St., Mount Auburn, in a building that is owned and occupied by Parker J. Lillie. Meridian pays rent of $4,683 per year.

Last December, local and state inspectors found insufficient food supplies in two of Meridian's College Hill homes, and batteries were missing from smoke detectors in two apartments run by Ohio Residential in Westwood.

MERIDIAN RECEIVES monthly reimbursements from the state which cover administrative costs, such as the rent paid to Lillie. Bowen, as a member of the controlling board, voted in favor of the standing reimbursement formula for Meridian.

Lillie said Bowen had "absolutely no connection" with his lease with Meridian. He said Bowen was an insurance agent for Lillie before he went to the legislature and that he receives commissions from past sales.

Wright's homes, both under Meridian and Ohio Residential, have been the subject of complaints.

As reported by the *Enquirer*, state and local inspectors, as well as citizens, have criticized them for food and fire safety problems.

Last December, local and state inspectors found insufficient food supplies in two of Meridian's College Hill homes, and bat-

teries were missing from smoke detectors in two apartments run by Ohio Residential in Westwood.

As for the grant to Cargile, state officials contend his project was handled no differently from others, but some operators questioned whether he got preferential treatment.

DeFrancesco, immediate past president of the Ohio Private Residential Association, an association of group-home operators across the state, said he knew of no grants available from the department in 1983, except to county boards of mental retardation.

"This is the first I've head of capital [for group-home developers]," said DeFrancesco.

Griff Hogan, executive director of the 21-year-old Resident Home for the Mentally Retarded of Hamilton County, said "we tried" to get capital money to purchase and renovate a group home in Madisonville.

"We were informed by the department that capital monies weren't available."

Bowen Defends Efforts To Recruit Minorities

While defending his efforts to recruit blacks to open group homes for the mentally retarded, state Sen. William F. Bowen acknowledged that his involvement might raise some eyebrows.

"I can see how someone would have some question about that," Bowen said, when asked about a list of campaign supporters and business associates who have directly or indirectly benefited financially from his votes as a member of the State Controlling Board.

In retrospect, he said, he might have done something differently.

"I think I would because of the reflection it makes," he said.

The "reflection" is that Bowen, a Cincinnati Democrat, has voted to send state mental retardation dollars and business in the direction of his friends who gave him political and financial support.

BUT BOWEN said that appearance is false. People who know him, he said, know he does not work that way. Still, he said, "I make no bones about it. I'm concerned about black folks helping each other, about black business development and that type of thing."

To that end, Bowen said, he held several meetings last year to recruit blacks to the group-home program that was about to grow because of the closing of Orient Developmental Center, the state's largest center for the retarded, near Columbus.

> ***"I didn't know that other group-home operators had been trying to get grant money had been denied . . . There's always been grant money in that program . . ."***
>
> *William F Bowen*
> *State Senator*

Bowen links his interest in mental retardation, in general, to his younger sister, Phyllis, who was left mentally retarded after she was stricken with spinal meningitis. She died in Orient when she was 16, he said.

As a 14-year legislator, Bowen said, he has always been interested in mental health, mental retardation, corrections and welfare—areas where people are dependent upon the government for their existence.

WHEN HE talked to other blacks about becoming group-home operators, he said, he stressed the need for quality of care. Yet, long-time group-home operators, some department employees and many professionals in the field complain that expertise became secondary to the state's desire to recruit blacks.

William Cargile III attended one of Bowen's recruitment meetings and subsequently received a $311,360 grant from the mental retardation department and used it to help buy 10 houses which became group homes.

As a member of the controlling board, Bowen voted in favor of that grant to Cargile's N&J Care Inc., and, about the same time, Cargile contributed $1,000 to a Bowen campaign fund for the rejection of Issues 2 and 3 on the November, 1983, ballot.

Bowen said Cargile had been a long-time supporter, but that his financial support had nothing to do with his receiving the grant.

IN FACT, Bowen said, he was not even aware until later that N&J Care was Cargile's corporation or that Cargile had purchased 10 group homes. He expressed surprise at the amount of the grant and said he had "no knowledge" of how much Cargile had contributed to his campaign.

"Other than voting on the controlling board, I had nothing to do with the mechanics of the project, the mechanics of the grant or the selection of the people or any of that. . . .

"When I found out that one person had all the homes, and I thought it was seven, I was ticked about that. I didn't like that idea at all. There were too many people out there who have the wherewithal, I assume, based on the program and so forth, to have some of those facilities. I would not have been involved in that process for any one person having that many homes."

Other group-home operators have complained that they were told by the department that no capital grants were available, even though Cargile received one.

BOWEN SAID he wasn't aware of that either.

"I didn't know that other group-home operators had been trying to get grant money had been denied . . . There's always been grant money in that program . . . That was one of the things that was announced at the meeting, that there were grant funds, start-up funds."

Asked if Cargile received preferential treatment because he had attended the recruitment meeting, Bowen said, "I question that."

Several other Bowen supporters or associates also benefited from that deal. Edward Jacobs Real Estate, for example, helped Cargile buy the 10 houses and then gave a $1,000 contribution to Bowen's campaign fund against Issues 2 and 3. Ultimately, Bowen paid himself $2,500 in consulting fees from that fund.

"I see what you're saying," said Bowen.

"I can see somebody raising a question about that."

Still, Bowen insisted that he "hadn't thought" about the impressions those circumstances would give.

He insisted that he has stressed quality care at the same time that he recruited black providers.

"I felt there should be black providers," said Bowen. "In my presentation, I talked about the care. I don't know what the department did. We don't get involved in any of that."

HOWEVER, HE said, he has recently been concerned about problems with care at Batavia Developmental Center, a 126-bed center for the mentally retarded, operated by a minority firm called New Horizons Habilitation Homes.

"The department, we've been talking to them about the care and condition of the patients. There has to be additional oversight and sensitivities. You've got to deal with it. That's apparent out there," said Bowen.

Aronoff Doubly Involved

In his dual role of lawyer and state senator, Stanley J. Aronoff has taken an active interest in group homes for the mentally retarded.

As a partner in Aronoff, Rosen and Stockdale, a Cincinnati law firm, Aronoff represents William Cargile, a black contractor whose N&J Care Inc. purchased 10 group homes last year.

As a senator and a member of the State Controlling Board, he voted in favor of an appropriation that indirectly paid the rent on N&J Care homes.

ALTHOUGH ARONOFF abstained from voting on a $311,360 grant to N&J Care, citing his position as Cargile's attorney, he *did* vote in favor of a reimbursement contract with Meridian Community Care Inc., which leases the homes from N&J Care. Part of the monthly payments to Meridian is paid to N&J Care in rent.

In a recent interview, Aronoff said he probably didn't realize what he was voting for since Meridian's contract was in a batch with many others from the mental retardation department.

"I would normally have pulled that out. It probably didn't have Cargile listed," Aronoff said. "Had I known it, I would have done one of two things: I would have said this may affect a person who's a client of the office and still voted for it, or more likely, I would have said pull [it] out . . . and I abstain on that item.

"If I did it, it was a mistake," he said.

FURTHERMORE, EARLIER this year, Mark Reis, an attorney in Aronoff's law firm, helped negotiate a deal among N&J Care, Meridian and the state that made Aronoff "escrow agent," or watchdog over the money that was coming from the state to Meridian.

Until then, Aronoff said, Meridian had not paid Cargile's B&J Contractors for safety-related construction on the houses.

Meridian had contracted with B&J for $94,407 worth of safety-related construction work, but B&J had been paid only $5,000.

As escrow agent, Aronoff was supposed to make sure Cargile got paid.

"My name as escrow agent could have been, should have really been, the firm name," said Aronoff. "Anybody could have been escrow agent. They both trusted me."

Aronoff said no money ever came through him, and, even if it had, he said he would have received no compensation for acting as escrow agent.

Aronoff also received political contributions from Cargile.

Owner Wanted Out A Year Later

Building contractor William Cargile acknowledges he wanted to make money when he became the owner of 10 group homes for the mentally retarded in Cincinnati last year.

When State Sen. William F. Bowen and other state officials were concentrating on the recruitment of blacks to open new group homes, Cargile saw himself as a businessman taking advantage of an opportunity.

With the help of the $311,360 state grant, Cargile's new N&J Care Inc. bought 10 houses in Cincinnati last fall.

Before a year was up, Cargile said he had decided he wanted to get out.

"I'M NOT going to say I didn't want to make money," he said, "but it was not a money-making situation."

Long-time group-home operators say Cargile received special treatment be-

cause he received capital grant money not available to them.

Cargile has been a regular contributor to the campaigns of both Democrat Bowen and Republican Stanley J. Aronoff over the years.

In Cargile's view, he received no special favors from Bowen, who invited him to explore the possibility of becoming an owner of group homes.

Despite his past successes with state construction contracts, what looked like a sure thing in group homes fell prey to the inevitable unpredictability of government.

As Cargile and Aronoff, his attorney, explain it, the deal turned sour. Partly because of problems with cash flow from the state. And partly because of differences between Cargile and Geri Wright, whose company leased and operated the homes.

Meanwhile, Aronoff said, money for safety-related repairs to the houses was diverted to pay for the group-home staff, which was already hired. That left Cargile's construction company, B&J Contractors Inc., waiting to be paid for $94,407 worth of work.

"THE TWO of them were a little like oil and water," Aronoff said.

The intervention of U.S. District Judge Joseph P. Kinneary also had an impact. Kinnerary slowed the closing of Orient Developmental Center, the state's 1,500-bed institution for the mentally retarded, and that meant fewer residents were arriving to fill Cargile's new homes. In turn, the state payments were delayed.

Meanwhile, Aronoff said, money for safety-related repairs to the houses was diverted to pay for the group-home staff, which was already hired. That left Cargile's construction company, B&J Contractors Inc., waiting to be paid for $94,407 worth of work.

Cargile said he also had second thoughts in the aftermath of the deadly fire in December, 1983, at a group home in North Avondale—which occurred only two months after N&J Care closed on the 10 houses.

"That's serious business," Cargile said. "If something happened and people got hurt, they'd say, 'Cargile, why didn't you do so-and-so?'"

SO, EIGHT months after he incorporated N&J Care to buy the houses, he resigned as chairman and turned it over to Wright, who is also president and executive director of Meridian Community Care Inc., which operates the group homes.

As Cargile and Aronoff, his attorney, explain it, the deal turned sour.

The houses are still owned by N&J Care, but N&J Care is no longer headed by Cargile.

Edwin Radcliff, director of administrative services for the state mental retardation department, said Cargile's ability to obtain 60% financing for the 10-home purchase was key to his getting the grant to use as a 40% down payment.

It was the only capital grant issued to a private company in 1983. Others went to county boards of mental retardation.

Cargile appeared to have a good deal.

On the front end, state money provided a hefty down payment on a $750,000 transaction, and, then, on the back end, state money services the $500,000 mortgage.

HERE ARE the figures:

N&J Care received $311,360 from the state mental retardation department. That was the down payment on the $757,400 purchase price for 10 houses, plus partial payment of closing costs, according to state officials.

That left $446,040 to be borrowed.

N&J Care borrowed $530,200—$84,160 more than required—from Major Federal Savings & Loan Association in 20-year loans.

Then, N&J Care leased the buildings to Meridian, a non-profit firm which has a contract with the state to operate the homes.

Mark Reis, one of the Cargile's attorneys, said N&J Care borrowed the extra to cover the cost of taxes, insurance, closing costs, attorneys' fees, accountants' fees and real estate fees. He said the closing costs alone, at "four or five points," amounted to about $30,000.

Meridian is reimbursed each month by the state for the care it provides. Payments include rent ranging from $700 to $1,000 per month per house, which Meridian pays to N&J Care.

If the houses are used as group homes for 40 years, the entire amount of the loans will be repaid by state tax dollars.

MARK REIS, one of the Cargile's attorneys, said N&J Care borrowed the extra to cover the cost of taxes, insurance, closing costs, attorneys' fees, accountants' fees and real estate fees. He said the closing costs alone, at "four or five points," amounted to about $30,000.

There was one more incentive for Cargile in the deal.

The lease between N&J Care and Meridian specifically provided for home improvements to be done by Cargile's construction company, B&J Contractors. If a firm other than B&J Contractors did the improvements, N&J Care reserved the right to serve as construction manager for a fee of 10% of the contract price.

AS A result, B&J Contractors was hired by Meridian for at least the $94,000 worth of work in dispute.

Radcliff said that, for a period in December, there was a holdup on the flow of state money to Meridian because retarded residents were not transferred from Orient to Meridian homes as quickly as anticipated.

The hiatus came about when Judge Kinneary ordered a temporary halt to the transfer of the retarded out of Orient last December.

IN DOING so, the judge agreed with the Ohio Legal Rights Service, a watchdog group charged with protecting the rights of the mentally handicapped. Legal Rights had charged the state with "dumping" the retarded into ill-prepared homes.

Because the state couldn't move people to Meridian homes, Radcliff said, Meridian did not receive its money for the care of residents or payment of rent and maintenance. Still, Meridian had hired staff in preparation for the moves, and money that could have gone to B&J Contractors for repair work was used to pay the staff, Radcliff said.

Critics Racially Biased, Operator Says

Geri Wright, executive director and president of Meridian Community Care Inc., says criticism of "minority" group-home operators as "inexperienced" is racially motivated.

Through the year-old Meridian, Wright operates 10 group homes purchased by N&J Care Inc. with the help of a capital grant from the state mental retardation department.

She believes criticism of her operation is unjust.

"We're in Cincinnati, southern Ohio. I'm a black provider. The first large one," she said.

WRIGHT, WHO also runs four other Cincinnati group homes for Ohio Residential Services, is not inexperienced in the business.

She has worked for the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities since 1976. And she has operated other group homes in Cleveland for Ohio Residential.

Even so, everything has not always gone well in the 10 Meridian homes she opened in five months' time earlier this year.

Inadequate supplies of food at several Meridian homes were reported to the state by its own inspectors last December and January.

Some of the complaints irritate Wright as petty. "Food is a consumable item," she said. "If I buy groceries, which I do, on Wednesday, if you come on Tuesday, it's at the end of the week."

But the state's own rules for licensure require a home to keep "fresh food supplies sufficient for two days and staple food supplies sufficient for at least one week . . . at all times."

AFTER THE December complaints, state officials reported that food problems were corrected. But they were raised again in June by the Association for Retarded Citizens—Hamilton County, an advocacy agency, in regard to an Ohio Residential home in Westwood. The association's letter to the state complained that food has been scarce there on numerous visits since last October.

After the December complaints, state officials reported that food problems were corrected. But they were raised again in June by the Association for Retarded Citizens —Hamilton County, an advocacy agency, in regard to an Ohio Residential home in Westwood. The association's letter to the state complained that food has been scarce there on numerous visits since last October.

Wright, as head of Meridian, has applied to the state to take over operation of the four Ohio Residential homes in Cincinnati, and Ohio Residential's president, Charles Virga of Massachusetts, has agreed to that transfer.

The two corporations overlap in another way.

One of Ohio Residential's board members, Charles Harper, an out-of-state businessman, is also on the board of Meridian.

Another board member is Walter C. Evans, a Dayton, Ohio, attorney, who also

plans to open several group homes in Dayton through another minority-owned firm called Montgomery Residential Development Inc.

COMPLETING THE board are Thomas Childs and Thomas Childs, Jr., both of Cincinnati.

Wright, who worked at three state-run developmental centers in northeastern Ohio before joining Ohio Residential, said state mental retardation officials encouraged her to start her own firm to run group homes.

Meridian was incorporated in July, 1983, with Wright as president and executive director.

The firm's brochure calls it the "only minority-managed provider of residential services to the mentally retarded in the state of Ohio."

Dayton Center Shows Politics' Effect On Care

By Karen Garloch

Client Care at Dayton is Controversial

If there is one place that exemplifies the politics of caring for the mentally retarded and the state's apparent indifference to the needs of retarded people, it might be Dayton, Ohio.

Several elements are in place: The superintendent whose resume came with a letter of recommendation from a state legislator. A medical director who resigned when the superintendent ignored her advice on the health of her retarded patients. Retarded people who were moved from one place to another to expedite the closing of a state institution. Not to mention abuse and sickness.

Since the new superintendent, Freddie L. Williams, took over at Montgomery Developmental Center, north of Dayton, nine months ago, more than 25 top-level employees have left.

AMONG THEM is the former medical director, Dr. Lois Kersh, who resigned when Williams ignored her advice against moving some Montgomery Center residents to a new "special unit" in Dayton.

Kersh objected because the new unit did not yet have a medical director on staff. But that was not the only complaint.

The 72-bed unit opened last March, despite criticism from the state budget office that it was wasteful and costly.

State mental retardation officials planned to use it as a temporary home for the retarded who were leaving Orient Developmental Center, near Columbus, which closed in April. But when a federal judge said no Orient residents could go to a temporary home, state officials switched plans.

Instead, they chose residents from Montgomery Center—who had never lived at Orient—and moved *them* to the unit, leaving space for Orient people at Montgomery, with cottages for more than 100.

EMPLOYEES, PARENTS and advocates for the retarded complained that the shuffling was done only so the state could hasten the closing of Orient, regardless of the needs of the individuals.

When Kersh objected, she said, "it was like it didn't really matter ... They said, "These people aren't [former Orient] clients. We'll send them."

With the changeover in Montgomery Center's administration, some remaining employees and parents complained of declining care and potential danger for the residents.

Some examples they cite:

◇ A retarded man named Richard, who lost control of his bowels, was burned when an employee washed him off with hot water from a laundry hose.

◇ Bernard, normally hyperactive to the point of having a behavior problem, recently became so lethargic from a drug he was given that a hospital aide thought he would just "lay there and die."

FOR ALL these reasons, Joan Thompson, chairman of the Citizens Advisory Board for Montgomery Center, is scared.

"We can't allow this to continue. People's rights here in the state of Ohio are being violated," she said.

When she complains to Williams, she said, she gets no satisfaction.

"What can you do? They aren't listening to us. Nobody gives a damn," said Thompson, a New Carlisle resident with a mentally retarded son who lives at home.

Williams, who became superintendent last January, said the quality of care has not changed.

While he regretted the turnover in staff, he said, it was in administration, not among direct-care workers. Furthermore, he said,

Reprinted from *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 2, 1984

direct-care staffing meets state minimum standards of one employee to every four residents. On third shift, the standard is one employee for every eight residents.

He suggested that ex-employees were disgruntled because they resisted the switch from "high-functioning" residents to more severely retarded people who would be harder to care for.

"Sometimes we want to keep our happy little haven," Williams said.

"No one's indispensable. We provided good care then. We're providing good care now."

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Critics who disagree point to incidents of abuse and neglect.

When Kersh treated Richard for second-degree burns on his leg from his scrotum to below his knee, she said she could not be sure how they got there.

But Williams acknowledged that an employee erred when he washed Richard with hot water from a hose in the linen room. He said the responsible employee was suspended for three days.

The Ohio Highway Patrol, which is called to investigate problems at state facilities, made a report which was shared with the Montgomery County prosecutor's office and the center's administration. That report has not been made public.

Then there's Bernard. When he transferred from Orient to Montgomery last spring, he was almost too active to be controlled, recalled a hospital aide who worked in his cottage.

But that all changed when he was given Inderal, a psychotropic drug, said the aide, who asked not to be identified. Bernard became "very lethargic. He couldn't sit up. He couldn't chew or swallow. We told the nursing staff about it for a week, and they checked his blood pressure, and said, 'Oh, he's all right!'"

THE AIDE said she finally called the nursing director. "This man's going to lay there and die," she recalled saying.

Several days later, she said, Bernard was taken to the medical cottage, and then to a Dayton hospital. Now, he is off the drug, the aide said, he is his old, happy self.

Thompson, of the citizens group, has questioned the use of Inderal. "Either they're using these people as guinea pigs or they're doing this to keep them quiet, and on whose orders? If a person is having behavioral problems, then let's treat the behavior problems," she said.

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Williams said the center's philosophy is to treat behavior problems with programming, not drugs. However, he said, there are "some patients" on psychotropic drugs, prescribed by the center's psychiatrist.

In the last few weeks, a woman whose daughter died at the Montgomery center filed a $1 million lawsuit against the department and the department's director. It was filed by Mary Straub, of Dayton, on behalf of her daughter, Debra Lynn Bice, who died in 1982.

Williams noted that the woman's daughter died before he became superintendent and before the current administration took over. "That kind of gives you some insight into the allegations and the misdirection of some of the allegations that are made," he said.

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The moves from Montgomery Center to the special unit were treated too much like a business, complain some Montgomery employees, former employees and advocates. Less evaluation than inventory.

"We have a bed here. We have a body here. Let's match them up," said Jackie Henkle, who was fired as Williams' administrative assistant.

Another critic, Wade Hitzing, said that out of all the people at Montgomery, "it just so happened that, lo and behold," only the ones who had never lived at Orient—and weren't subject to the judge's order—were moved.

Hitzing was a member of the expert review team mandated by the federal court order to monitor conditions at Orient.

Kersh objected to the move for medical reasons. She refused to release her patients because the unit "didn't have a doctor and they didn't even have a nurse 24 hours a day."

"**I WOULD** be legally abandoning them [the retarded] if I let them go. Some of them were seizure patients who couldn't do without their medication . . . I wouldn't discharge them. They sent them against my orders to the special unit . . . That's why I resigned."

When she did, four others from her medical staff also resigned—the back-up physician, the nursing director, a registered nurse (who has since returned) and the pharmacist.

Williams said he and Kersh had "different philosophical beliefs" about the running of Montgomery Center.

Minnie Johnson, director of the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities, said Kersh "was wrong."

People were transferred to the unit based on "their readiness to move into the community," Johnson said, ". . . It was a good decision to allow us to do all the things we needed to do at that time."

BUT KERSH believed it was a bad time to change physicians because the new residents coming into Montgomery center were some of the last to leave Orient and had some severe medical and behavioral problems.

At the same time, other experienced employees were leaving, such as the speech therapist, a licensed clinical psychologist, a social worker, the staff trainer and the safety and health inspector. The program director and the superintendent's administrative assistant were fired.

"Instead of drawing on those other peoples' experience when he [Williams] didn't have any, he got rid of them," Kersh said.

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Critics of the superintendent cite his lack of experience in the field of mental retardation and his political connection to Dayton State Rep. C.J. McLin, who recommended him for the job.

Critics of the superintendent cite his lack of experience in the field of mental retardation and his political connection to Dayton State Rep. C.J. McLin, who recommended him for the job.

"It's too bad he doesn't have some MR [mental retardation] background, because he's really a nice guy," said Thompson, of the citizens board.

She was a member of the search committee that interviewed job candidates and made recommendations, twice, to Johnson.

During the first round of interviews, Williams was not among the candidates, Thompson said. Johnson asked for a second round, and, this time, Williams was among those interviewed.

His resume was accompanied by a letter from McLin to Johnson, saying "Fred would make an excellent addition to your staff." But he was never recommended by the committee, Thompson said.

"We submitted three names again, none of which were his, and isn't it funny that we got Fred as superintendent?" she said.

BOTH WILLIAMS and Johnson, who appointed him, defend his abilities to run the center.

"Fred Williams was an educator [in Dayton] and was the Teacher of the Year," Johnson said. "Knowledge is transferrable. I don't know why, in mental retardation, [some advocates think] we're dealing with something that's so mystical that an educated person cannot comprehend."

McLin said Williams is "an exceptionally bright person, and I'm pretty sure that he's probably now one of the best that they have in the system. My last report is that it's a better-run center than it ever has been."

FOR HIS part, Williams said his work at the National Center for Research in Vocational Education at Ohio State University covered the needs of special populations, such as the mentally retarded.

Also, for three months before he became superintendent, he was on the Orient transition team which helped match Orient residents with community homes.

"As I told Joan [Thompson] on a number of occasions, if one is a good administrator . . . there are some skills that are transferrable to any setting," said Williams. He is a graduate of Miami University with degrees in speech communications, English, administration and curriculum development.

"One does not need to have lived with a mentally retarded person for 25 years . . . to be a competent administrator," he said.

High-Cost Care

Temporary Dayton Unit Has Proven Expensive

Even before the Dayton Special Unit opened last spring, a state budget analyst called it a waste of money.

Little did he know just how much the state would spend there.

Parents and employees say care is excellent at the 72-bed Special Unit, located on the second and third floors of a building on the Dayton Mental Health Center grounds.

And well it should be.

For six months, the state has reimbursed the unit for the cost of 72 residents when only 26 people have been living there. The overpayment amounts to $114,828 per month.

BACK IN December, 1983, when budget analyst Larry Weaver wrote a scathing report on the cost of the unit, he thought 75 retarded people would be living in it, at a cost to the state of $85.65 per day per resident.

Instead, the state has been paying almost that much to care for only one-third that number of people.

Brenda Whitney, a group-home operator in the Dayton area, said she and others in the profession were surprised to learn of the payments.

"I really don't understand how they could justify that level of funding to continue after they knew the number of clients they had," said Whitney.

SINCE MARCH, the state paid $183,862 a month to the unit, even though the cost of caring for 26 residents—at the $85.65 per day approved by the State Controlling Board—figures out to $69,033.90 per month.

Edwin Radcliff, director of administrative services for the state mental retardation department, acknowledged that the state has paid the Montgomery County

Board of Mental Retardation for more residents than live in the unit.

He said there will be a "reconciliation" of the difference once the unit is closed. The August 31 closing date was delayed. Some unit residents have transferred to group homes; 12 remain to be placed in homes.

Edwin Radcliff, director of administrative services for the state mental retardation department, acknowledged that the state has paid the Montgomery County Board of Mental Retardation for more residents than live in the unit.

THE OVERPAYMENT was made in line with a state policy that gives newly opened facilities a financial boost during the first six months of operation, he said.

Under that policy, the state paid the unit as though it were 92% occupied, regardless of whether the unit was full, for six months.

However, even when the funds are reconciled, Radcliff said, the state won't expect all the money to be paid back. He said the cost of staffing the unit has been higher than expected because residents who came there from Montgomery Developmental Center are more severely retarded than originally anticipated.

"The costs are pretty much the same [as] if there had been 72 mentally retarded people there," said Radcliff.

WHITNEY SAID other operators who have asked the state for higher reimbursements to care for more severely retarded people have been turned down by the department.

The unit's success, she said, has demonstrated to the department that "with the right amount of money, more severely retarded clients can be served [outside of institutions] with the right amount of staff."

Elvia Thomas, the unit's administrator, said the "intensive staffing ratio" is partly responsible for the unit's success. There are always at least three staff members to every resident, a ratio much higher than in the state's developmental centers.

But before the unit was ever opened, or the expenditure ever approved by the controlling board, budget analyst Weaver called it wasteful because the state had closed a developmental center, only two buildings away, less than a year before.

The closed center had cost the state $49 per day per resident, he wrote, compared to $85.65 per day per person for the new unit.

If Weaver was comparing the cost of the new unit to the cost of "that little, run-down, old" developmental center, Johnson admitted that the older center was cheaper. However, she said, the department wanted to close it because "it was a disaster, too."

ON TOP of that, the state paid one-time start-up costs of $69,727.94 for the new unit and continued to pay unemployment

benefits to employees who were laid off from the closed center.

At the end of his report, Weaver recommended approval of the expenditure for the unit, but he added an apparently sarcastic caveat:

◇ That the retardation department "selects one high-ranking deputy director to be shot at sunrise tomorrow."

A handwritten note, of unidentified origin, at the bottom of the report said: "This is scandalous. At what cost do we stop?"

WEAVER, WHO has since changed jobs in the budget office, declined to comment on his report.

Minnie Johnson, director of the mental retardation department, called it narrow and short-sighted because Weaver did not have the "big picture."

"Staff people who are subordinate, all they can do is respond within the knowledge they have," she said.

If Weaver was comparing the cost of the new unit to the cost of "that little, rundown, old" developmental center, Johnson admitted that the older center was cheaper. However, she said, the department wanted to close it because "it was a disaster, too."

Once it was closed, however, the alternative to not opening the unit was to keep Orient Developmental Center, near Columbus, open longer. That would have cost $45,000 a day that wasn't in her budget. Plus, another state department was waiting to convert Orient to a prison.

"Any way you cut it, I made a good decision," said Johnson. "I saved taxpayers' dollars, and I got people out of Orient into a better environment."

Conlan House Offers Quality Care

By Karen Garloch

It could have been any morning at 4310 Erie Ave., a group home for the mentally retarded in Madisonville.

After breakfast was over, Rick Densmore helped the live-in house manager, Stevie Philips, clear the table and fill the dishwasher.

When Densmore brought his cereal bowl, Philips reminded him that something was missing, still on the table.

"IS IT your fork or your spoon?" she asked.

Densmore answered correctly that it was the spoon and went to get it.

Their word game continued.

When he admired her pretty earrings, she asked him, "Where did I get the earrings? At the hardware store or the jewelry store?"

At the jewelry store, he said correctly.

"Where did I get my shoes?" she asked. "At the hardware store or the shoe store?"

Again, he answered correctly, "The shoe store."

Through questions like these during the routine of daily life, Philips and her staff endeavor to teach Densmore and three other mentally retarded men how to get along in the community.

Having lived years at the recently closed state institution at Orient, Ohio, the men at Conlan House, the name for the home on Erie, are only now learning to accomplish tasks that most people take for granted: To eat and chew properly, to make their beds and clean their rooms, to wash their hair and take showers, to visit the bank and the grocery.

IT SHOULD be the norm in any group home, but it's not.

In some homes, residents don't get regular meals, much less learn table manners.

Conlan House is one of the better group homes in Cincinnati, operated by the Resident Home for the Mentally Retarded of Hamilton County, which has a board of trustees made up of parents.

At the Resident Home, the quality of life isn't measured by the number of square feet per person, but by the kind of living that goes on within that space.

Having lived years at the recently closed state institution at Orient, Ohio, the men at Conlan House, the name for the home on Erie, are only now learning to accomplish tasks that most people take for granted: To eat and chew properly, to make their beds and clean their rooms, to wash their hair and take showers, to visit the bank and the grocery.

"You can have a nice home, even with good food, and they [residents] can still be unhappy because they're lonely," said Griff Hogan, executive director of the Resident Home, which operates three group homes and a school for the mentally retarded.

Hogan said care is taken to make sure the residents meet people and make friends "so that they're not just living, they're enjoying life. That's not in any [state] regulation."

THE STATE can require clean sheets, adequate food and adequate staff, but "the thing that makes the difference is the caring," Hogan said. "There's nothing in the

Reprinted from *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 3, 1984

regulations that says you have to have dedicated staff."

For Philips, living with the residents at Conlan House isn't just a job. It's her life.

She and her adopted son, who is also handicapped, share the three-story house with the four men whom she considers "friends."

"To me the most important thing is the rapport that I have," said Philips. "The comradeship and rapport and friendship. This is my home and my only home. It's not my job. This is my way of living. These are my friends."

On a Sunday in August, she accompanied the group to the professional tennis tournament at Kings Island.

In many other homes, employees work three shifts, partly because the job is difficult and turnover is often high. But the Resident Home's philosophy is that a live-in manager is a must, for the sake of continuity.

"YOU HAVE to have a high level of tolerance," Philips said.

And she obviously has. She has worked for the Resident Home in several locations, first at the St. James home for children in Walnut Hills and then at the Stettinius Avenue home in Hyde Park before going to Erie.

Others on her staff at Erie worked with her previously at those homes. That kind of continuity and rapport among staff members takes time to build.

While some agencies have opened multiple homes at once, the Resident Home has been more deliberate.

"We're relatively slow, and we are very careful," said Hogan. "One of our goals is to show just how good a group home can be. When you set that standard for yourself, you can't work quickly."

Opening more than one home at once or moving in 12 residents at a time is not a practice he recommends.

"I can remember my first day of college," said Hogan, "trying to get used to two roommates. Even with normal intelligence, that's hard."

BUT WHILE some group home operators, like the Resident Home, may not agree with the state's speed at setting up residential homes, they don't want bad experiences in other places to sour the public on the idea of community living for the retarded.

But while some group home operators, like the Resident Home, may not agree with the state's speed at setting up residential homes, they don't want bad experiences in other places to sour the public on the idea of community living for the retarded.

Hank Bersani, a Miami University professor of educational psychology and a frequent consultant to the Resident Home, said the philosophy behind group homes is right.

"Even the places where there are problems are almost all better than the institutions, by leaps and bounds," he said. "On one hand, our job as monitors and advocates is to never be satisfied ... but we don't want that advocacy to be misinterpreted.

"It's clear to me that where there are failures, they are failures of practice, not method. The method is sound. There are clear examples of success, both here and other places ... We've got the right idea, but we're not doing it well enough."

F. Stephen Schnabl, executive director of the Hamilton County chapter of the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC), said that despite problems, community homes

are "better" than institutions. Even so, accidents and problems occur.

"IT'S THE same way that accidents [happen] in your home," said Schnabl. "There's absolutely no way that we can take risk—all risk—out of the lives of people with mental retardation."

Most of the former Orient residents who came to Hamilton County are doing well, he emphasized. Out of about 300 residents moved back to the county from Orient since 1977, Schnabl said his association knows of problems in five homes, with about 30 residents. "Eighty percent of the folks returned are working out beautifully."

But to make sure that residential placement is as successful as it can be, the Ohio ARC, a statewide network of advocates who take responsibility for the retarded, has established a voluntary monitoring program.

Schnabl said about 25 volunteers have been trained for inspections of group homes in Hamilton County. Six homes have already been visited.

About 60% of the group home operators in the county have agreed to allow volunteer monitors inside their homes, he said. The ones that haven't include VOCA Corp., Westfield Services (a branch of Community Assistance Corporation), Renaissance Apartment Placement Inc. and Community Options.

THROUGH THE monitoring program, Schnabl said, the Ohio ARC has offered the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities a "free way to stretch their case management." But he is disappointed that the department has rejected ARC's offer to do monitoring for the state.

Minnie Johnson, director of the department of mental retardation, said she personally supports the ARC monitoring plan but cannot delegate that responsibility to volunteers for legal reasons.

"The state is becoming very, very vulnerable when we have volunteers going on private property, and if something happens, and so forth," she said.

"My attorney, quite frankly, has advised us . . . that we should deal with that internally in terms of staffing, that we cannot delegate, by statutory authority, something that, in essence, is our authority," she said.

Bersani, who helped develop the guidelines to be used in the ARC monitoring program, is one of the volunteers who has already visited several area group homes to evaluate the care that goes on inside. He said the Ohio ARC hopes to look beyond basic state requirements.

"They [the state] tend to focus on water temperature and germ count and square feet of bedroom space," said Bersani. "We want to know, not is there furniture, but would you want to sit on it if it was in your home."

AS FOR families who may wonder how to spot a good home and how to handle a complaint, the Resident Home has published a family's guide to evaluating residential services entitled "I don't want you to think I'm a trouble maker, but . . ."

The guide encourages families to look at 15 major areas, including the happiness of the resident, personnel working for the agency, fire safety features and cleanliness in the home, the agency's reputation, the kind of meals provided and the choices that residents are allowed to make about their own lives.

A question to ask is "Would I like to live there?" If the house or apartment setting doesn't seem right for a son or daughter or sibling, don't place them there, advises Resident Home. Or try to get them transferred.

When a problem arises, the Resident Home advises working with a "direct-care" worker at the home or, failing that, the administration of the agency itself.

If that should prove unsuccessful, the guide advises calling the case manager at the state mental retardation department or an advocacy agency, such as the Ohio ARC or Ohio Legal Rights Service, a state and federally funded legal watchdog agency for the mentally handicapped.

Professor Praises Other States' Home Programs

In 1972, a President's committee on mental retardation cited some "Islands of Excellence" in the nationwide trend toward group homes for the mentally retarded.

But a mental retardation professional at Miami University says Ohio has been slow to learn from other states' successful experiences in moving from institutions to group homes.

Hank Bersani, a professor of educational psychology at Miami University, has visited many of the programs cited in "Islands of Excellence" and a subsequent committee report called "The Leading Edge—Service Programs That Work." He believes they could provide a model for community residences in Ohio.

"OHIO DOES not look anywhere else for guidance," said Bersani, who has studied residential projects in New York, Nebraska, Kentucky and Massachusetts in his role as teacher and consultant.

"It's a relatively new enterprise. Expansion has just been unbelievable. Places where there have been lawsuits or threatened lawsuits, it's been the fastest. Certainly the court case in Ohio has had a lot to do with it," said Bersani.

Bersani said the concept of community living, as opposed to institutions, is good. "The method is sound. There are clear examples of success, both here and elsewhere," he said.

Three of the "bright spots" cited by the President's committee include the seven-county region around Louisville; a four-county region called Macomb-Oakland, north of Detroit; and a state program operated by the Eastern Nebraska Community Office of Retardation (ENCOR).

The programs in Macomb-Oakland and in Eastern Nebraska are directed at the prevention of transmitting an "institutional subculture" to the community homes, Bersani said.

FOR EXAMPLE, in the counties north of Detroit, approximately 200 group homes have opened in recent years, but none housed more than six residents (including only two wheelchair-bound residents per home).

The program moves residents into the homes gradually and tries to mix residents who have lived in institutions with those who haven't.

On the contrary, in Ohio, with the closing of Orient Developmental Center, the state's largest institution for the mentally retarded, homes for eight, 10, 12 or 15 are not uncommon. Many times, all residents moved in at one time, all directly out of an institution.

"Compared to Orient, it's a lot better [in those homes]," said Bersani. "But compared to the way you choose to live your life, it's grossly inferior and clearly dehumanizing.

But a mental retardation professional at Miami University says Ohio has been slow to learn from other states' successful experiences in moving from institutions to group homes.

"Countless other places have all done excellent jobs in moving people into smaller places direct from institutions," he said.

"Why settle for a home for 15 that is better than Orient but not as good as we could do? In a sense, we say that because we've done a lousy job in the past becomes justification for doing our less-than-best job

now," Bersani said.

ANOTHER PROBLEM that has been tackled in the Louisville area is the philosophy that the more severely retarded the residents, the larger the facility must be.

To the contrary, said Bersani, "the more severely handicapped you are, the smaller program you need."

But it takes more money.

In the Louisville area, Kentucky officials authorized a financial structure which encourages the placement of a single handicapped individual with a family. Instead of $300–400 a month per person, the state now pays $1,000 a month or $12,000 a year for the care of one handicapped person in a single-family home.

The reasoning is that caring for that individual in a nursing home or other institution could cost $45,000 a year. So there is a financial savings overall and individual care that couldn't be offered in an institution, Bersani said.

"I'VE NEVER seen a person who couldn't be supported in the right community residence if he wanted to," he said. "The issue is not the severity of the disability of the individual, it is the ability and sophistication of the service system that the person moves into.

"What the house manager [may] say is 'We tried it with Bill, and Bill couldn't handle things in a community residence.' I say, 'What you mean is, you couldn't handle Bill in this community residence.' The community residence can be designed that Bill can live in."

In Louisville and Macomb-Oakland, Bersani said, officials decided that if they had 100 homes, they would have 100 homes with one resident each. "Both Macomb-Oakland and Louisville are resisting playing the numbers game," he said.

On the contrary, Ohio's mental retardation officials characterize Fairfield and Batavia developmental centers, each with more than 100 beds, as community settings. They count the residents who have been moved there from Orient as residential placements.

"They [the state] said they deinstitutionalized 112 people to [Fairfield center in] Butler County, and, from my point of view, that's a grossly inaccurate statement," Bersani said.