

Health and Mental Hygiene

Spurred by a series of shocking revelations about the care of the mentally ill which was published in one of Baltimore's leading newspapers in 1949, the General Assembly established the Department of Mental Hygiene, now included in the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene as the Mental Health Administration, and gave it full supervision over all matters pertaining to the custody, care and treatment of persons who are mentally ill or mentally retarded. Since then, the State has spent millions of dollars erecting new buildings and improving existing facilities. More important, there has been a change in concept which regards such institutions as treatment centers rather than as custodial areas. Increasing emphasis is being placed on research in this field.

At Rosewood State Hospital, the Esther Loring Richards and the Jacob E. Finesinger Children's Centers were opened in 1958 and 1961, respectively, to provide psychiatric treatment for children with serious emotional, psychiatric and neurotic illnesses as distinct from those who are mentally retarded.

The Clifton T. Perkins State Hospital, a 300-bed facility, costing nearly three million dollars, began operating in 1960. It inaugurated in Maryland a program of psychiatric therapies combined with rehabilitative procedures for all adult male patients who require maximum security.

In 1970, Great Oaks Center, originally named the Maryland Metropolitan Washington Retardation Center, a major new facility for mentally retarded children under thirteen years of age in the Southern Maryland area, was opened near Beltsville. It is the first regional center to be opened by the Mental Retardation Administration.

The Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents in Catonsville began offering its services in 1971 for emotionally ill children. In 1971, the Drug Abuse Administration was created to replace the Drug Abuse Authority which had proven ineffective.

Patuxent Institution, at first an autonomous agency, now a part of the newly-created Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, began operating under the Department of Correction in 1955, as an experiment in the use of indeterminate sentences in the treatment of defective delinquents.

Medical facilities have also been expanded in recent years. Three chronic disease hospitals have been constructed: Deer's Head State Hospital in Wicomico County (1950),