

ON DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION CLINIC

Speech by
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DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION CLINIC

Statistics

North Carolina has eleven Developmental Evaluation Clinics scattered throughout the State and operating under the supervision of the North Carolina State Board of Health.

This is certainly something that all North Carolinians can be proud of for this means that there is a center within 50 miles of 96% of the children of this State.

We are leaders in this very important area of public health care. During the fiscal year 1968-1969, North Carolina had better geographical coverage than any other state in the United States, including California and Washington, which are the only states with more clinics than North Carolina.

This is an amazing accomplishment. But are our people using the clinics which have been made available to them, clinics which the State of North Carolina has placed so near to their homes?

The answer is a resounding "YES". During 1968-1969 our clinics served more children per one thousand population than any other state.

This is even more amazing when we realize that clinics such as this one were first organized as late as the 1960's.

There Reason for Being

What prompted North Carolina to undertake this effort on behalf of our children. The answer is simple, I think. Historically we have been a people who are concerned about those who for some reason are less fortunate, who have an extra burden to carry, whose way has been made more difficult by no fault of their own.

North Carolinians in the past have been a compassionate people and their leaders in State Government have not been exceptions. Leaders in State Government - in the area of public health - saw children who needed help they were not receiving and initiated the means by which to make a better life, a more productive and happy life for them.

What is the mission of clinics such as this one here in Fayetteville? It can be simply stated by saying that it is to prevent, detect, and treat handicapping conditions caused by retarded development. But though the aims of these clinics can be simply stated, carrying them out, even for the highly trained and dedicated personnel employed in them, is certainly a difficult task and a labor of love.

They recognize that the handicaps they help youngsters cope with spring from many sources. Retarded development is

frequently, but by no means always, entirely mental retardation.

We know that a child's growth physically and mentally can be halted also by a crippling disease, malnutrition, genetic inheritance, accidents and environmental factors.

Method of Approach

There is always the hope that many children will be brought to the attention of clinic personnel as soon as a slow-up in normal development is detected. This would be ideal, for then efforts can be directed toward arresting or altering the condition causing the retardation. All too often, however, the problem is beyond this point before discovery and the task becomes more difficult.

There is no more noble work, in my opinion, than taking a person with limited ability and helping him develop his fullest potential. We are fortunate, I think, in that we have recognized the value to society and the handicapped individual of having him make his own way.

It is a tribute to the leadership of public health programs in this State that they have recognized the problem of developmental retardation among our children and developed clinics where timely and intensive diagnosis are available to halt retardation and develop maximum potential.