

Statement by:
ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT MORGAN
Reporting on "Rehabilitation Day"
at the General Assembly
April 28, 1971

On April 13, I held a news conference and announced plans for a "Rehabilitation Day" at the Legislative Building. Today is that day, and already many of the persons are here from every part of the State to participate in the planned activities. Others are continuing to come in.

Today's events are possible only because of the efforts of scores of citizens, who volunteered their time and resources to organizing, promoting, and making this special day a reality. We wish to especially thank those persons who provided transportation for the disabled, the many successful disabled people who were willing to come and relate their rehabilitation story to one of their legislators, and also to the members of the General Assembly, many of whom altered their busy schedules and made other provisions for "Rehabilitation Day".

I referred to this day as special. I sincerely believe that it is because it is the first such day we have had in our State and it may very well be the first time that such an event has been held with the legislative body of any state. Another factor that makes this day special is that those persons who

will be speaking with their legislators about rehabilitative services can in no way be accused of being self-seeking - their rehabilitation program has been either successfully completed or assured - their interest is in the future opportunities available to other North Carolinians.

No attempt at a "hard sell" has been planned; rather this event is an educational effort and gives some representatives of our rehabilitated handicapped citizens a chance to sincerely express appreciation for past services the State has provided them and many others.

I personally hope that as a result of today's activity in this building three ideas will emerge and gain greater acceptance.

- (1) The problems of physical, mental, emotional and behavioral disabilities represent a major economic and social cost to all of us. Their cost is staggering both to government and to individuals.
- (2) Disabled people want to pursue productive lives - this is their greatest desire. I have never found a disabled person who viewed the prospects of dependency or custodial care as very attractive. With our current level of knowledge and abilities, most disabled can be rehabilitated.

- (3) Rehabilitation as a concept, and as a service, should be adopted as a major emphasis and program of State government. Health services currently represent our largest expenditure to insure the mental and physical "well being" of our population. Good health care is not enough, however, because after receiving the best of health services, thousands of people continue to have chronic limitations. We are and we should be saving increasing numbers of lives from the hazards of birth, living, and disease processes. In addition to saving lives, we need to make equal efforts to improve the quality of life. Rehabilitation enhances the meaning of lives saved by our health care system.

On April 13, I talked about four things I think we must do for ourselves and our disabled citizens. These things were:

1. Adequately fund our present rehabilitation programs.
2. Provide for needed but nonexistent programs, such as comprehensive centers for the severely physically disabled.
3. Remove architectural barriers, and
4. Awaken the public and the government to the scope of the disability problem and the benefits which accrue from investing in rehabilitation efforts.

With me today are three gentlemen, Senator John Henley and Representatives Dwight Quinn and Howard Twiggs, who are serving as co-vice chairmen of "Rehabilitation Day". They will now speak more specifically about some of these things which I have just mentioned.