

LEVINE, H



CITY OF NEW YORK  
DEPARTMENT OF WELFARE  
250 CHURCH STREET  
NEW YORK 13. N. Y.

DIGBY 4-8700

HENRY L. MCCARTHY  
COMMISSIONER

April 10, 1953

Lawrence Kolb, M. D.  
Executive Secretary  
The Philadelphia Mental  
Health Survey Committee  
6645 32 Street, N. W.  
Washington 15, D. C.

Dear Dr. Kolb:

We have twelve day centers in New York City, servicing some 5,000 older persons. The usual pattern in the day centers, though they differ in some respects, is for the Department of Welfare to supply the staff and the know-how, the private social agency to supply the building and some of the equipment, and for the community in each area where the center is organized to supply the Board of Directors and lay and professional people, who raise additional funds necessary for operation. The approximate cost of the center is about \$30,000 a year, which approximates about \$30 a year per person. This includes rental, maintenance of building, staff, and equipment and materials used in crafts.


We believe our program is basically a mental health program. We are not concerned with recreation; we are concerned with a substitute for the loss of a daily routine or work. We are not concerned with evening programs or weekend programs. We believe all people need leisure time activity and that the older person should be part of the community in his leisure time activity.

But it is the 9 to 5 hours which we are concerned with. We have found that activity is tremendously important to mental health and that mental health is communicable. We have had a drop of 50% in clinic attendance and in some centers as high as 70%, after six months attendance at our centers. We have had no admissions to mental hospitals in the ten years of our existence. Dr. Rusk pointed up that in the Hodson Center alone there should have been at least 60 admissions to mental hospitals in the seven years of its existence. We have had patients from Manhattan State Hospital and other hospitals who have made unusual adjustments to living in the community by attending the day centers. We have seen severe Cardiac cases thrive and function adequately in our center program. We believe this is one of the basic answers to the tremendous number of older people.

In New York City there are some 661,000 people past 65. 100,000 are employed. 50,000 are self-employed. This leaves some 510,000 people with little to do and a long time in which to do it. Very few of these people can be absorbed in the labor market, even though conditions might be perfect. Most of them are housewives, and most of the others are aged people. We believe the need is to do a preventive job for the 510,000 people, so that they do not deteriorate prematurely. We believe they need the group support and group activity, which can help maintain their strength. I see no other answer but the day center as a new resource in the community. A day center program, plus medical and boarding arrangements, can be a constructive answer to the need of the older people.

The enclosed material may be of interest to you.

Sincerely,

  
Harry Levine, Administrator  
Day Center Program for the Aged

HL/ew

Enclosures