SENATE, No. 1540

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 3, 1996

By Senators CODEY, MARTIN, Bassano and MacInnes

AN ACT concerning State psychiatric facilities and supplementing Title 30 of the Revised Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. As used in this act:

"Clinical treatment staff" means a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, physical therapist or social worker licensed pursuant to Title 45 of the Revised Statutes, an occupational, recreation, art or music therapist or a substance abuse counselor.

"Nursing direct care staff" means a Human Services Assistant, Human Services Technician or a nurse licensed pursuant to Title 45 of the Revised Statutes.

2. a. The Commissioner of Human Services shall designate staff who are not employed at a State psychiatric facility listed in R.S.30:1-7 to conduct unannounced site visits to randomly check staffing on various shifts at a State psychiatric facility, at least three times during a calendar year. During the site visit, the designated staff shall review: the daily operation of the facility, including, the actual deployment of clinical treatment staff and nursing direct care staff on various shifts to determine whether the actual deployment of staff meets the documented staffing plan of the facility; the system for reporting any information concerning alleged patient abuse or professional misconduct as provided for in P.L. , c. (C.)(now pending before the Legislature as Senate Bill No. of 1996); the operation of therapeutic programs or activities for patients; and any other aspect of the facility which the commissioner deems appropriate.

b. The commissioner shall provide and implement, on an ongoing basis, surveillance procedures designed to identify problems related to patient care at a State psychiatric facility. These procedures shall include, but not be limited to, the use of security cameras and the use of persons to perform covert investigations of the daily operation of the facility. Persons performing covert investigations shall assume roles which do not suggest their actual function.

3. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill requires the Commissioner of Human Services to designate staff who are not employed at a State psychiatric facility listed in R.S.30:1-7 to review the daily operation of the State psychiatric facilities by conducting unannounced site visits to randomly check staffing on the various shifts at a State psychiatric facility, at least three times during a calendar year.

During the visit, the designated staff shall review:

- the actual deployment of clinical treatment staff and nursing direct care staff on various shifts to determine whether the actual deployment meets the documented staffing plan;
- the system for reporting any information concerning alleged patient abuse or professional misconduct;
- the operation of therapeutic programs of activities for patients; and
- any other aspect of the facility which the commissioner deems appropriate.

In addition, the bill requires the commissioner to provide and implement surveillance procedures, including but not limited to, the use of security cameras and the use of persons to perform covert investigations of the daily operation of the facility. Persons performing covert investigations shall assume roles which do not suggest their actual functions.

This legislation is part of a package of bills which was recommended in the Final Report of the Senate Task Force on Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital, June 1996, and is designed to improve the care provided in the State's psychiatric facilities. The task force believes that the more frequent and intense monitoring of daily operations, as provided for in this legislation, will provide enhanced patient care and reduce the frequency of patient abuse and neglect.

Requires Commissioner of Human Services to conduct unannounced site visits and provide undercover surveillance at State psychiatric facilities.