

SENATE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 1543

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: NOVEMBER 4, 1996

The Senate Human Services Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 1543 with committee amendments.

As amended by the committee, this bill requires the Department of Human Services to provide in-service, on-site training for all nursing direct care staff and support staff who have direct contact with patients at a State psychiatric facility. The chief executive officer, or his designee, shall designate and train employees from within the facility to be the instructors.

The in-service, on-site training shall include:

- C sensitivity training to encourage nursing direct care staff to interact with patients;
- C an abuse prevention program which is designed to train nursing direct care staff and support staff to recognize probable incidents of or behavior that constitutes patient abuse or professional misconduct, educate and empower employees and patients and which shall include discussions in ward community groups concerning abuse, rights of staff and patients, and procedures for reporting abuse pursuant to Senate Bill No. 1542 (Bassano/Codey) or Assembly Bill No. 2426 (Bucco/Murphy) of 1996;
- C cultural training which addresses racial issues; and
- C an extensive orientation program for new employees.

The provisions of the bill require that nursing direct care staff and support staff who are employed on the effective date of the bill, shall complete training within 18 months of that date. Staff hired after the effective date must complete training within one year of their date of hire. Subject to the provisions of Title 11A of the New Jersey Statutes, the "Civil Service Act," if an employee does not successfully complete the training program within the allotted time periods, he shall be subject to salary and promotion limitations or demotions and in the case of deliberate noncompliance with the training program, removal from employment.

As of January 1, 1999, a Human Services Assistant or Human Services Technician shall not be hired unless he has successfully completed one year of schooling in a four-year or two-year college or

one year of nursing in an accredited nursing program. A Human Services Assistant or Human Services Technician employed on the effective date of the bill, who does not hold an equivalency degree or high school diploma, may complete that degree or diploma as part of training which shall be conducted in a manner to be determined by the Commissioner of Human Services. Also as of January 1, 1999, any Human Services Assistant who has successfully completed one year of schooling in a college or one year of nursing in an accredited nursing program shall earn a minimum base salary of \$25,000, based on a 40-hour work week. In addition to increasing the salary level for newly hired Human Services Assistants who meet the new educational requirements, the bill further provides an incentive for current Human Services Assistants to seek a higher level of education, and as a result, earn a higher salary.

Lastly, this bill would not preclude the Commissioner of Human Services from providing training to a person employed by a private entity under contract with the State to provide contracted services at a State psychiatric hospital.

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 training program, as provided for in this legislation, will provide staff with the training necessary to provide enhanced patient care and will reduce the frequency of patient abuse and neglect.

The committee amended the bill to reflect that Human Services Assistants work a 40-hour week. Committee amendments also indicate that current Human Services Assistants or Technicians may, but are not required to, complete an equivalency degree or high school diploma. Also, instead of providing the degree program as part of in-service on-site training, this training shall be conducted in a manner determined by the Commissioner of Human Services. Lastly, the bill includes a technical amendment to reflect the bill numbers for the legislation requiring reporting of patient abuse and professional misconduct, which is pending before the Legislature as Senate Bill No. 1542 (Bassano/Codey) and Assembly Bill No. 2426 (Bucco/Murphy) of 1996.