



WASHINGTON STATE COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM

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COVER LETTER TO GO WITH POSITION PAPER AND "DOLLIVER STATEMENT"

This letter and attached are in response to the requests for this information from other states facing a similar challenge.

You will find enclosed the Position Statement, issued by the executive committee of the Washington State Council on Alcoholism in July, 1972, a similar paper, usually referred to as the "Dolliver Statement", and a copy of a legislative act. The "Dolliver Statement" was approved by WSCA's executive committee and presented to James M. Dolliver, administrative aide to Daniel J. Evans, governor of the state of Washington, in the fall of 1972. The legislative act was passed in early 1973.

All of the enclosures deal with a struggle that took place in the state of Washington between the state bureaucracy and those who believe that "alcoholism should not be pigeonholed as merely a symptom . . ." Although both papers are self explanatory and take essentially the same position regarding alcoholism vis-avis mental health, you may be interested in additional background.

As part of a consolidation of several state departments and other agencies dealing with health and social problems into one "super agency", the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, the state's alcoholism program was moved from what had been the department of health to what had been the community mental health section of the old department of institutions.

The move was against the advice of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Alcoholism; but because the psychiatrist in charge of the new office of mental health had apparently impressive credentials in alcoholism, and because the head of the state's alcoholism program was to continue in that position, there was no outcry from persons working in the field.

The short calm which followed the change was broken at a seminar for alcoholism workers and mental health personnel at which the mental health director announced that, henceforth, alcoholism programs would be under the local community mental health and mental retardation boards. The furor caused by this announcement was only heightened by a memorandum issued by the mental health director shortly afterward.

Concerned alcoholism personnel inside and outside of state employment appealed to Washington State Council on Alcoholism. Consequently, the president of the Council, Alice Ralls, invited the mental health director to meet with the WSCA executive committee and other interested persons to discuss the new development.

At the subsequent meeting, the mental health director attempted to allay the fears of those present and insisted that his memorandum had been misunderstood. Although he was asked to issue a clarifying memorandum, it was evident he had no intention of doing so; in fact, he did not.

It was shortly after that meeting that WSCA was requested to outline its position, and the Position Paper was issued. (See paragraph 4 of DOCUMENTATION, page 2 of "Dolliver Statement".)

Neither the meeting with the mental health director nor the Position Paper acted as a deterrent on the state bureaucracy's efforts to place alcoholism under the jurisdiction of the office of mental health at the state level and under community mental health boards at the local level. The bureaucracy's determination became even more evident when it issued its Proposed Rules and Regulations for Implementation of Community Mental Health, Drug Abuse and Alcoholism Legislation. (See paragraph 1, page 1, and paragraph 3, page 3, of "Dolliver Statement".)

Shortly after the meeting at which members of the executive committee of WSCA presented Mr. Dolliver with the Council's resume of what was transpiring between the Council and the bureaucracy, the 1972 annual meeting of the Council was held. James Milam, Ph.D., author of the Position Paper for the Washington State Council, was the main speaker at that meeting.

The confrontation that took place following his talk will remain in the memory of those present for years to come. Aligned on one side were the mental health director, the chief of the state alcoholism program, and a few of their supporters. In opposition were those who supported the Position Paper and those who opposed the proposed rules and regulations, previously mentioned.

Confrontation or no, the bureaucracy remained unswerving in its purpose to subordinate the alcoholism program to the mental health bureaucracy and proceeded with the steps made necessary by law to implement the proposed rules and regulations which had stirred so much protest.

Having failed by persuasion, confrontation, or appeal to sway the bureaucracy, the Council hired an attorney, who appeared at the hearing where the rules were to be adopted prepared to enjoin the department from putting them into operation. The threat of legal action was soundly based on Washington State law and cause adjournment of the hearing without any action on the proposed rules.

Senator William S. Day, chairman of the Senate Committee on Social and Health Services, had been informed of the Council's controversy with the department and had written a letter urging that the rules be held in abeyance until his committee could scrutinize them (as required by law); and his letter may have been instrumental in having the meeting adjourned. There was no mention of his letter, however, in the mental health director's statement adjourning the meeting.

Nevertheless, members of the Council did appeal to Senator Day, and, undoubtedly, the Council's appeal had much to do with Senator Day's sponsoring an amendment to The Uniform Alcoholism and Intoxication Treatment Act. (The third enclosure in this letter.)

That amendment clarified the legislature's intention to keep the state alcoholism program separate from the office of mental health. The act also gave counties greater power in approving state funding of local alcoholism programs.

It should not be assumed that the Washington State Council on Alcoholism was 100% behind the effort to keep the alcoholism program from being sub-merged under mental health. There was criticism of the executive committee's tactics, resignations from the executive committee and even a letter writing campaign in support of the head of the state alcoholism program--albeit at his solicitation.

However, those who opposed forcing the alcoholism program into the mental health bureaucracy were just as steadfast in their purpose as was the bureaucracy and, luckily, had more support in the governor's office and in the legislature.

Although the divisiveness which inevitably came about is to be deplored, the ultimate goal seemed to be worth it--at least in the minds of most members of the Council.

In a conference with the governor, members of the Council and certain influential friends tactfully let it be known that some changes in personnel might be helpful.

Sometime after that meeting the mental health director resigned, the head of the alcoholism program was transferred, a recovered alcoholic was hired to replace him, and the office of alcoholism was established on the same level as the office of mental health in the bureaucratic hierarchy.

Those steps made it possible for the Council and the state program to unite once again and embark on a unified attack on alcoholism.