

# Community services reorganized for better efficiency

by Marsha Shewczyk

Confusion about where to go for what services may exist in the community since the recent reorganization of the Health and Social Services Branch in Warm Springs. The changes were made not to confuse everyone but in an effort to increase efficiency and to avoid duplication of services.

What was previously known as the Family Resource Center has been divided into two separate departments. It used to include the Group Home, the Outreach Program, the Pre-Adolescent Treatment Home and the Foster Placement Program. Now, one department is involved with residential treatment known as Youth Services and the other new department deals with the outpatient treatment service, now called Community Counseling Services.

The Alcohol Program has also been affected since it handled both outpatient and residential patients. It now deals exclusively with a residential program leaving the outpatient treatment to the Community Counseling Service.

The directors of the three existing departments, Youth Services, Community Counseling Services and the Alcohol Program claim that the changes are for the better. Once the transition is complete, says Alcohol Program director Gordie Knapp, "things will be running smoothly and we will be able to serve the community better."

## Youth Services

Included within the Youth Services department are all residential treatment programs designed with children and adolescents in mind. The actual physical location of these programs remains at the Group Home and the Path Program, also known as the Vernon Jackson home.

Other residential care is based in foster home settings. Close tabs are kept on those in foster homes, a responsibility of the Group Home where director of Youth Services Merrill Featherstone has her office.

Children and adolescents who are placed in either the group home or the PATH care unit are not necessarily court referred although that is often the case. Residents may come to the homes voluntarily.

Featherstone feels that the care homes "need not be a place to put 'bad' kids. It could be a place to strengthen family ties and make both children and parents aware that there are many options in their lives that are open to them." She feels that sometimes being closely involved in a family situation will blind family members to other ways of living. Sometimes it is good to step out and take a look.

At the Group Home adolescents from ages 12 to 18 can find a place to stay where counselors are available. An effort is being made to establish a day program for adolescents who seek a more structured day. They will have a place to go before and after school with planned activities and group with which they can associate. A tutor would be made available to them upon request.

Whether a youth is placed at the home through court



Working with children—Staff members Yvonne Leno and Bonnie Teeman work with young people in the home environment provided at the Group Home.

proceedings or voluntarily seeks help at the group home, the treatment includes every effort to encourage the youth to act independently and with responsibility. Parental participation is also invited and encouraged.

The pre-adolescent treatment home (PATH) is another phase of the residential treatment program designed specifically for infants and children up to the age of 12. Children may be in the home for one reason or another. Featherstone recognizes that "we all need help occasionally." A critical stage does not need to be reached before help is sought. The residential "homes are a resource," Featherstone says.

The foster care homes are another part of the Youth Services. When necessary, a child might be placed in a resident outside the family environment. This would happen when it is for the welfare of the child. The first choice is the home of a relative.

But any home which is selected must meet certification requirements. Foster Care Counselors are available to work with the extended family for bring them up to the required standard for foster homes.

The foster parents involved in the program are offered every assistance available. Featherstone and other workers help them to deal with the intricacies of being a foster parent. Raising other people's children is much different than raising one's own children. Featherstone says, "The whole issue of attachment and then losing someone has to be dealt with."

The only gap in the residential treatment program Featherstone feels is one left by the absence of a detainment facility away from the community. In the currently existing residential treatment programs there are no external controls; no locked windows or doors. In some cases a child will not stay in the home. Director Featherstone says, "sometimes there has to be that external control to treat a child who is out of control. Sometimes containment is treatment. Kids are very reasonable once in control."

## Community Counseling Service

Although housed in the same building as the Group Home and Youth Services office, the Community Counseling Service provides support to clients in a different way. The concern in this newly created department is solely for outpatients treatment. The Director of the department, Barbara Wiest says they see people at the Counseling Center who do not need residential care for treatment of their problems.

The Counseling Service provides assistance with any number of problems from family counseling to drug and alcohol counseling. Child related problems can also be brought before the well trained counselors as well as personal troubles. The counselors are trained in many areas.

Oftentimes problems are interrelated. For example, where there is family bickering there may also be an alcohol problem. The counselors "try to work with people in the

family unit" as much as possible, says Wiest. The four counselors available at the Counseling Services receive continuous training and "gear themselves to working with the entire problem. They are also working to alleviate future problems," Wiest says. She goes on to say, "the counselor helps a person sort out how things go wrong and how to cope with problems."

The Community Counseling Service also contains within it the Labor Management Program. Previously this was a function of the Alcohol Program, since the reorganization it has become a part of outpatient services. Labor Management relations demand attention when, because of a problem, work is affected. It does not demand residential treatment but outpatient counseling may be essential.

Another aspect of the Community Counseling Service is the Prevention and Community Education Program. Under the direction of Caroline Cruz, mental health and social issues are presented to the community. Prevention of problems must begin in early stages. If people knew how to help themselves a problem might not get into a critical stage. An example would be one sighted by Alcohol Treatment supervisor Priscilla Frank when she says that by the time many young people reach their eighteenth birthday they are already in the middle stages of alcoholism.

All levels of professional and para-professional counseling is obtainable through the Community Counseling Service, including a part time

psychiatrist. Sometimes a person just needs another person to listen to him, commented Weist. Like the Youth Services, the Counseling Service encourages independent thinking and self help. It offers direction.

Someone interested in seeing a counselor on an outpatient basis for any reason has only to call the Community Counseling Service. An interview will be set up at which time information will be gathered. A counselor will be assigned to the client for long range counseling.

## Alcohol Program

People who require residential treatment due to alcohol related problems are referred to the Alcohol Program. The only outpatient service available there is the antabuse program.

Prior to reorganization the alcohol program included outpatient treatment, labor-management relations counseling and drug counseling. The crisis service is still a part of the program offering 24 hour service for problems which require involvement such as suicide, family fights and severe depression.

Primarily, though, the alcohol program deals with alcohol related problems. Clients are referred by the court or come in on a voluntary basis. Director Knapp says "35 to 40% of the residents are self referred."

Knapp says he likes to see the patients stay for at least 30 days in the residential care unit. They can stay longer if they continue to advance in the treatment process. They might be working in various ways toward recovery by developing socially or occupationally. Knapp says an alcoholic is impaired in all phases of his life so work must take place in all areas.

Since a few responsibilities have been removed from the Alcohol Program and turned over to the Community Counseling Service—"we can better concentrate on what our job is to serve the community better," We can act "more to the purpose of our existence," Knapp says.

The Alcohol Program's existence seems to be quite important as 65 to 85% of the reservation's population are affected by alcohol in some way. 45 to 50% of these are under the age 30. According to the Priscilla Frank, "Children begin to experience their first episode of being drunk about the age of 8 years." The family is involved in the problems of each individual member it is true but the alcohol program must concentrate on treatment of the individual leaving family counseling to the Community Counseling Service.

Each of the programs is designed to fit the needs of a particular segment of the Warm Springs community. And each is structured to enable the program to work together or with other departments. The total scheme is comprehensive and working towards alleviating the difficulties involved in living in today's modern society. The programs were created and exist for any community member who wants to make use of them.

