

SENATE No. 440

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH,
BOSTON, April 20, 1922.

MR. WILLIAM H. SANGER, *Clerk of the Senate, Senate Chamber, State House, Boston.*

SIR:— I have the honor to submit herewith the report of the Department of Public Health made in response to the recent Senate order to this Department relative to facilities for the treatment and care of persons addicted to the use of narcotic drugs.

Respectfully,

EUGENE R. KELLEY,
Commissioner of Public Health.

REPORT RELATIVE TO FACILITIES FOR THE
TREATMENT AND CARE OF PERSONS AD-
DICTED TO THE USE OF NARCOTIC DRUGS.

To the Honorable Senate:

In compliance with your recent order that the Department of Public Health report to the Senate as to the present facilities furnished by the Commonwealth for the treatment and care of persons addicted to the intemperate use of narcotic drugs, at what institution or institutions such facilities exist, and at what other State institutions provisions might be made for such care and treatment, I beg to submit the following information.

The institutions under State control which are devoted wholly or in part to the care of the sick may be considered in four groups: those under the supervision of the Department of Mental Diseases, sixteen in number; the institutions under the supervision of the Commissioner of Correction, five in number; the institutions under the supervision of the Department of Public Health, four in number; the institutions under the supervision of the Department of Public Welfare, five in number.

Before considering the advisability of using any or all of the facilities afforded by these institutions it is desirable to consider certain pertinent facts concerning the care and treatment of persons addicted to the intemperate use of narcotics. The basis of this treatment consists in the withdrawal of the drug and the building up physically and morally, as far as it may be possible, of persons under treatment for this condition. The first requisite is easy of accomplishment. The second is far more difficult, particularly as under our law all voluntary commitments may terminate upon three days' notice, and with rare exception the persons under treatment voluntarily will seek their release long before their physical and mental condition warrants it, finding further restraint irksome. It is almost the universal rule that persons returning to their

former environment will sooner or later again seek readmission, setting up an "endless chain" sort of procedure which achieves no result. It seem obvious, therefore, that the expenditure of the State's money for this ineffective treatment should not be continued, and that if the State is to undertake the care and treatment of persons addicted to the intemperate use of narcotic drugs, it should be upon such basis as would give the State an adequate chance for real success.

In considering the various institutions enumerated there are also certain basic facts which must be remembered. It is obvious that an institution planned to provide highly specialized treatment for the tuberculous should not be expected to provide care and treatment for a condition for which the physical requirements for treatment were never considered in its construction. It is well known that the hospitalizing of persons suffering from drug addiction with persons suffering from other conditions acts detrimentally to both, and in this particular group of institutions there exist no arrangements for the definite detention of patients which in the opinion of this Department is absolutely necessary in the case of drug addicts. It is therefor most earnestly recommended that no attempt be made to place the drug addict in the tuberculosis sanatoria. This same treatment holds true with equal force for the institution under the Department of Public Welfare dealing with juveniles, viz., the Industrial School for Boys, the Industrial School for Girls, the Massachusetts Hospital School, and the Lyman School for Boys.

The remaining institution under the control of the Department of Public Welfare is the State Infirmery at Tewksbury. A limited number of drug addicts of both sexes have been treated at this institution for many years past. In the past few years express statutory authorization has existed for the admission of persons suffering from drug addiction, subject to the request of the Department of Mental Diseases. This legislation was passed in an attempt to make some provision for committed cases, following the leasing of the Norfolk State Hospital, which is referred to in more detail later. The brief average length of time spent by persons committed as drug addicts to this institution is sufficient evidence in itself to prove

the unsuitability of the State Infirmery for the custodial care of drug addicts. In addition, this group of addicts, in the opinion of this Department, adds very materially to the administrative problems of the management of the infirmery. The Commissioner of Public Welfare and the superintendent of the State Infirmery both consider the institution quite unsuited to the efficient handling of drug addicts. In this opinion the Department of Public Health concurs, and strongly recommends that the practice of committing addicts to Tewksbury be discontinued unless the Commonwealth sees fit to carry out quite expensive structural alterations and additions to the existing facilities.

Prior to 1889 persons addicted to the intemperate use of narcotic drugs were apparently cared for in the various insane hospitals of the State. Because of the disturbances and the detrimental effect that the presence of the drug addict had upon the mentally sick, and *vice versa*, together with the increasing number of cases suffering from drug addiction and the excessive use of alcohol, it became necessary to make other arrangements for their care, and we find that provision was made under chapter 414 of the Acts of 1889 to establish the Massachusetts Hospital for Dipsomaniacs and Inebriates. This hospital was established at Foxborough in 1893, but the demand for beds for inebriates and drug addicts at Foxborough was never sufficient to fill the institution to an extent where it could be economically operated for this class of patients exclusively. Hence a gradually increasing number of insane patients were admitted. This in turn soon resulted in such an unsatisfactory condition, on account of the demonstrated detrimental effect that each group of patients had on the other, that in 1909 the trustees of the Foxborough State Hospital made recommendation to the Legislature that to achieve the best results in the reclamation of the dipsomaniac and the drug addict a hospital especially constructed and maintained for this purpose was necessary.

Under chapter 635, Acts of 1910, the Norfolk State Hospital was established for this purpose and became available for patients in the spring of 1914. The hospital was used until 1918. It appears that this hospital was only partially successful in carrying out the work for which it was established.

This was largely due, in the opinion of this Department, to the policy of receiving patients under voluntary commitments. During the war it became evident that the Federal government needed hospitals for the care of the service man requiring special treatment for nervous and psychiatric conditions, and on Oct. 1, 1918, the Norfolk State Hospital was leased to the Federal government for this purpose. This lease was in effect until July 1, 1919, when a new lease was executed which was to be renewed yearly for a period of four years. The Norfolk State Hospital is therefore not available for use by the Commonwealth until July, 1924. In order to care for the patients at the Norfolk State Hospital who were under treatment at the time the hospital was leased to the Federal government, arrangements were made with the Washingtonian Home and the Massachusetts Home and Hospital for the care of the male and female patients respectively. This arrangement has since been terminated by the Department of Mental Diseases.

The facilities available in the institutions under the Commissioner of Correction are the infirmaries of the Massachusetts Reformatory, the Reformatory for Women, the State Prison and that portion of the Rutland Prison Camp and Hospital which is devoted to the care of the tuberculous prisoner. For the purposes of this report all these can be ruled out of consideration as possible institutions for the treatment of drug addicts committed as such in contradistinction to the group of committed offenders against the criminal statutes who are incidentally discovered after incarceration to be drug addicts. This latter group represents a relatively small problem and can be handled by the Department of Correction as circumstances indicate. This leaves one institution under the control of the Department of Correction which is by no means entirely a correctional institution, the State Farm at Bridgewater. Here, and only here, in the opinion of this Department, drug addicts can be economically, adequately, and humanely treated.

In carrying out this order the State Farm has been visited with this point in view, and in the opinion of this Department ample and proper facilities are here available. A large amount of space which could well be used for the treatment of these patients is now vacant. Toilet and bathing facilities, mess hall, and ample space for outdoor exercise are to be had, together

with the supervision of a medical director who has had vast experience in the treatment of these conditions. It would appear that but a small additional appropriation would be necessary to provide for the adequate care of these persons at the State Farm.

Several conferences with persons qualified to give an expert opinion on the best methods of treatment of drug addicts have been held in carrying out this order, and a remarkable unanimity of opinion has been registered that there is but one effective method of controlling the drug addict which offers any hope of permanent rehabilitation, and that is that there must be absolute control over him for a sufficient period of time so that the drug may be withdrawn and his physical condition brought to the highest possible point. This means that the voluntary commitment in the usual case is of no value whatsoever and this Department recommends for your consideration that section 86 of chapter 123, General Laws of 1920, should be amended in so far as the drug addict is concerned by striking out the last two lines which read:

. . . No such person shall be detained more than three days after having given written notice of his intention or desire to leave the institution.

because this, in the opinion of the Department of Public Health, nullifies the whole purpose of the act and robs the patient of whatever chance there may be of restoring him to society rehabilitated. It would further appear that, aside from a small additional appropriation, the only other legislation necessary to arrange for this service at the State Farm at Bridgewater would be to amend section 62, chapter 123, General Laws of 1920, by inserting the words "to the State Farm" after the words "McLean hospital" and by striking out the words "to the Norfolk State Hospital", so that it would read:

Any of the judges named in section fifty, or a judge of the municipal court of the city of Boston, may commit to the McLean hospital, to the State Farm, or to a private licensed institution, by an order of commitment. . . .

Respectfully,

EUGENE R. KELLEY,
Commissioner of Public Health.