



Halt Nursing Home Funds

State Welfare Is Withheld; Probe Begins

BY PHILIP CAPUTO AND WILLIAM CURRIE

The state Public Aid Department announced yesterday it is withholding thousands of dollars in public aid payments to Chicago area nursing homes named in a **TRIBUNE** series exposing mistreatment and neglect of the elderly poor.

George Dunne, County Board president, disclosed plans to remove hundreds of public aid patients from substandard nursing homes in an attempt to force them to close.

Dunne and Harold Boysaw, deputy director of the county public aid department, said 30 investigators have been assigned to a full-scale nursing home investigation. Boysaw said he expects a preliminary report by late tomorrow or Thursday.

THE TRIBUNE began a series of articles Sunday disclosing patient abuse and wretched living conditions in area nursing homes. The probe was conducted in cooperation with the Better Government Association.

Reaction of Officials
In other related developments:

Ald. Claude W. B. Holman (4th), chairman of the City Council health committee, and Ald. Wilson Frost (34th) said they will submit a resolution March 10, seeking public hearings on nursing homes.

"It will be a sweeping investigation with the view of passing new laws, if necessary, to remedy the evils you have exposed," Holman said.

An aide to Gov. Ogilvie said the governor's office has directed state officials dealing with welfare payments and nursing home inspections to increase inspections from once a year to once every 30 days.

The aide also said his office has uncovered evidence that state employees may be selling information to some nursing home operators, telling them when surprise inspections are planned.

Hanrahan Comments
State's Atty. Edward V. Hanrahan said his office will "enthusiastically prosecute" all cases where there is evidence of patient brutality.

A Chicago health official admitted that one of the nearly 20 homes where a task force reporter worked as a maintenance man is not licensed by the city. A public health nurse attempted to inspect the Golden Age Home, 4549 N. Halsted St., and was turned away at the

Task Force Report

THE TRIBUNE Task Force spent six weeks preparing a comprehensive report on Chicago area nursing homes. To carry it out, reporters William Jones, Philip Caputo, William Currie and Pamela Zekman worked in nearly 20 nursing homes. The stories on this page and on page 2 continue this coverage.

door by an employe of the home.

Dr. Murray Brown, commissioner of the Chicago Board of Health, which controls nursing home licenses in the city, said his agency plans to seek no special action as a result of the disclosures.

"If you're looking for some reaction, you're not going to get it," Brown said. "We're reacting to it all year long. We do have limitations. What you as reporters can see in 24 hours we can't see in our inspection visits."

Wants Courts' Support
"There are people that shouldn't be in this business but they are there and it is difficult to keep them out. If you close them down, where are you going to put the people. It's not our purpose to close homes down. It's our purpose to care for the people!"

Brown also called for more support in the courts when asked. [Continued on page 4, col. 3]

State Freezes Aid to Nursing Homes

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tion is taken against poor conditions in nursing homes.

"We would like to have support from the courts," Brown said. "We aren't attacking the courts but we would like their full, whole-hearted support such as an increase in the amount of fines. A \$5 to \$1,500 fine is peanuts compared to the effect of cutting off payments."

Robert Wessel, chief of the medical administration section of the state Public Aid Department announced the cutoff of funds to nursing homes named in the series. He said his investigators are on the street to determine if the homes threaten the health and safety of patients.

"The reports in THE TRIBUNE show we are apparently not getting what we are paying for," Wessel said. Wessel said the ban on public aid payments now covers these homes:

Melbourne Nursing Center, 4621 N. Racine Av.; The Park Home, 2320 S. Lawndale Av.; Monterey-Drexel Home, 4616 S. Drexel Blvd.; La Grange Convalescent Center, 40 S. Ashland Av., La Grange; Austin-Congress Nursing Home, 901 S.

Austin Blvd.; and Whitehaven Acres Nursing Home, 1503 Greenwood Rd., Glenview.

Dr. Robert Glass, director of the Illinois Mental Health Department, said he will lead a series of inspections into homes where former mental patients now live.

Recall 1969 Scandal

Thousands of mental patients have been transferred into private nursing homes in recent years as a result of a 1969 scandal in mental institutions that resulted from overcrowding and brutality.

Glass said if he finds the same conditions outlined in THE TRIBUNE series he will ban the transfer of former mental patients to the nursing homes and transfer those already there.

Another source in the Mental Health Department complained that inspectors have apparently not been doing an adequate job in inspecting the homes. He complained that Board of Health inspectors have failed to notify mental health officials of conditions in some of the homes until nursing home operators are taken to court.

Replies to Disclosures

Hillel Yampol, executive director of the Metropolitan Chicago Nursing Home Association, described the disclosures as "superficial" and said his organization will hold a press conference at 9:30 a. m. today in their offices at 43 E. Ohio St.

The Illinois Nursing Home Association released a statement late yesterday criticizing what the organization described as very poor enforcement of standards, rules and regulations of the nursing home industry by the Chicago Board of Health and the County Health Department.

"The Illinois Nursing Home Association supports the nursing home investigation and proposed crackdown on standards enforcement in Chicago," said Ross A. Reardon, executive director of the group.