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Sent: Feb 10, 1995 4:16 PM AST MSG: ANGA-5899-1600
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Subject: NSIS261-COMMUNITY SERVICES--DISCUSSION PAPERS RELEASED
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Community Services Minister Jim Smith today released discussion papers on deinstitutionalization and unlicensed community residential services.

FEB 18 1995

The papers, which will be broadly circulated for public input, identify the policy issues that must be addressed as the department moves to replace adult institutional services for persons with mental handicaps and/or mental disabilities with community living arrangements.

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Dr. Smith said the deinstitutionalization discussion paper endorses the principle of normalization, that people are best served by supports that enable them to enjoy everyday life and participation in mainstream society.

The paper outlines the department's vision of an inclusive society that values individual differences and that supports and promotes individual responsibility and self-reliance.

The discussion paper on unlicensed community residential services (supervised apartments and small options: housing care, supervision and programs for up to three people with mental disabilities or handicaps) recommends policy and procedural approaches for addressing the outstanding issues related to unlicensed facilities, including approval and monitoring, assessment and classification, program standards, and budgeting.

"The minister said the Department of recognized the need to ensure that there is a formalized service structure in place that is responsive to the individual needs of those who will be moved from institutions.

"We must also identify appropriate standards and accountability mechanisms for all facilities that provide a level of care or supervision to individuals with a mental handicap or mental disability" the minister said.

Dr. Smith wants the public to participate in the process of formalizing the department's policies. "Family members, guardians, advocates, service providers, consumers, municipalities...all are important partners in our efforts to develop sound policies that effectively address those issues of concern," he said.

Both discussion papers are available at the Nova Scotia Government Bookstore, 1700 Granville St., P.O. Box 637, Halifax.

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Feb. 10, 1995