

HISTORY OF GOARC

As late as 1967, there were few alternatives in Nebraska for parents of the mentally retarded. They could send their child away to the state's only institution for the mentally retarded, located in a small farming community in the southeast corner of the state, or, if they were wealthy enough, they could send that child to a private institution even further away from his family. If parents rejected institutionalization, they were left with virtually no support in the community to assist them in working with their child.

So parents of retarded citizens in Nebraska banded together, as did parents in other states across the nation, to share their frustrations, and to seek to provide for their children what their government and neighbors had failed to provide. The void was so great--no services in the community and deplorable conditions at the institution--that these parents committed themselves to bringing about change. The action they pursued caused an entire new system of services for the mentally retarded to evolve. (The full story is best told elsewhere. See Wolfensberger and Menolascino, "Reflections on Recent Mental Retardation Developments in Nebraska", Mental Retardation, December, 1970.)

As members of the Nebraska Association for Retarded Children, a group of parents in 1968 requested a study of the state's institution for the mentally retarded. Nebraska's governor appointed a Citizen's Study Committee to examine the conditions of the Beatrice State Home and to provide him with direction for future state action. The committee was comprised of parents of mentally retarded persons who then resided at the state's institution, parents whose children