Overview of Records

Repository:
New York State Archives

Summary:
Colonies were created in 1883 as homes outside the main institution for younger patients who were judged to be potentially competent to be trained and transitioned to occupational and personal independence. This series documents duties and activities of female Colony Matrons, Colony Assistant Supervisors, and Colony Supervisors. Types of records include colony policies and procedure manuals for supervision and training of girl patients; individual colony descriptions and histories; colony personnel job descriptions; matron attendance sheets; notices; and subject files.

Creator:
New York (State). Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

Title:
Colony supervisors' and matrons' files

Inclusive Dates:
1918-1944

Quantity:
0.75 cubic feet

Series Number:
B2387

**Administrative History:**
Colonies were created in 1883 as homes outside the main institution for younger patients who were judged to be potentially competent to be trained and transitioned to occupational and personal independence. Colony staff consisted of a Colony Supervisor and Assistant Colony Supervisor. In the male colonies the supervisor and assistant were man and wife. As entities located physically from five to 80 miles outside the main institution, colony personnel were somewhat more responsible for carrying out their activities on their own initiative. Colony staff provided care, training, and oversight of their patients as well as oversaw their physical facilities. Assistant Colony Supervisors were required to have a professional background in either teaching or nursing or two years of satisfactory experience in the care of mental defectives.

Skills taught to female patients emphasized cooking and domestic service. Training for girls included personal hygiene, cooking, sewing, clothing mending and alteration, cleaning, decorating, personal finance, and other skills related to home economics. Male students were chiefly taught farming and dairy skills.

The Colony Supervisors (or Matrons) also performed public relations and employment placement duties for the colony with the local community. Employers of the patients were expected to help teach their patient-employees responsibilities of living in their homes and to gradually prepare the patients ultimately to be discharged from the institution.

**Scope and Contact Note:**
This series documents duties and activities of female Colony Matrons, Colony Assistant Supervisors, and Colony Supervisors (known as Psychiatric Attendants circa 1970). Types of records include colony policies and procedure manuals (1920s) for supervision and training of girl patients; individual colony descriptions and histories (1942); colony personnel job descriptions; matron attendance sheets; (policy and procedure) notices; and subject files. Matron attendance sheets document the names, service statistics, and working history of Rome State School matrons. Information is given in either "Active" (1928-1944) and "Inactive" (1918-1942) status, dates worked, dates one matron substituted for another, dates of vacation, illness, or other absences. The lists also contain notes recording initial starting dates, dates of transfer either to another colony, out of colony service to ward service, or date a matron had left service altogether. The "Colony List" provides sheets for each colony and a record of matrons who have worked there. A "matron" served as the head of an individual female colony. The sheets are handwritten on a lined paper format.
Use of Records:

Access Restrictions:
Records identifying patients are restricted permanently in accordance with Section 33.13, Mental Hygiene Law, relating to confidentiality of clinical records. Access permitted under certain conditions upon application to and approval by the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities.

Related Information:

Access Terms:
Subjects:

- Mental retardation facilities--Employees
- Developmentally disabled--Institutional care--New York (State)
- People with mental disabilities--Institutional care--New York (State)

Corporate Names:

- New York (State). Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.
- New York State Archives
- New York (State). Office for People with Developmental Disabilities
- New York (State). Department of Mental Hygiene

Genres:

- Attendance records
- Employees' manuals

Geographic Names:

- New York (State)

Functions:

- Describing workers
- Administering mental health facilities