

State Attacked on Nursing Home Licenses

Dr. Collette Rasmussen, chief of preventive medicine of the Cook County Department of Public Health, charged yesterday that the state has ignored thousands of violation reports on conditions in Chicago area nursing homes.

"The Illinois Department of Public Health has issued or renewed the licenses of nursing homes we (Cook County Health Department) have inspected and found unworthy of a license," Dr. Rasmussen said.

"We are led to believe this discrepancy is political," she said. "We have been told by nursing home operators: 'Just you wait, I'll make a few phone calls and have my license back in no time.'"

Wants One Authority

One agency should inspect and issue licenses, instead of the county making inspections and the state brushing aside the county's recommendations



Dr. Rasmussen

and issuing a license to an underserving home, Dr. Rasmussen said. She said both departments are understaffed which complicates regulating nursing homes properly.

Meanwhile, Gov. Ogilvie announced that Chicago area nursing homes suspected of not providing proper care for their

patients will be subject to sudden visits by two-man state inspection teams "at all hours" starting tomorrow.

The governor's action and the charges by Dr. Rasmussen follow disclosures by Tribune Task Force reporters working in cooperation with the Better Government Association of squalid conditions in many Chicago area nursing homes.

10 Teams Planned

The governor said 10 two-man state inspection teams, consisting of a nurse and an institutional inspector, are being assigned to the Chicago area to enforce compliance with state regulations.

In a news conference in the State of Illinois building, 260 N. La Salle St., Ogilvie said, "These visits will be unannounced, at all hours. To begin with, they will probably be during the daytime, because the inspectors can do a quicker job then. But . . . they may be dropping in at four o'clock in the morning."

Seeks Larger Force

He said he has directed the Illinois Department of Public Health to "build up an inspection capacity to do the kind of job, that obviously needs to be done."

The state will attempt to build up its inspection teams with corpsmen and medics returning from Viet Nam who want to continue working in a medical capacity.

"We are going to bring these places up to compliance with the regulations. We will cut off their financial support if it becomes necessary," Ogilvie said.

In answer to questions, the governor said, "Some of these

homes probably ought to be checked every week. Some others probably ought to be checked every day."

Eyes Hospital Use

Ogilvie said he is asking for an inventory of beds available in state hospitals. If it becomes necessary to close a number of nursing homes, and alternate accommodations are not available, he said then state officials are planning to house the nursing home patients in state hospitals.

In a separate development, patients were removed from the Park House nursing home, 2320 S. Lawndale Av., yesterday after the home was ordered closed by Dr. Murray Brown, city health commissioner. Park House is one of the homes exposed by the Tribune investigation as substandard. Dr. Brown had described the administration of Park House Friday as "dangerous to life."

The estimated 81 patients were being transferred to other homes as beds became available, Dr. Brown said.

Twice As Many Patients

Dr. Brown also said the city has ordered two halfway houses for mental patients on the North Side closed. An estimated 173 recently discharged mental patients live in the two houses.

Kenbeach Residential Care, Inc., 5107 N. Kenmore Av., was ordered closed because it housed almost twice as many persons as Kenbeach's license allowed, Dr. Brown said.

Kenbeach has 84 residents, altho the license limit is 43, he said.

Humboldt House, 1706 N. Kedzie Av., was ordered closed because the home consistently maintained only one employe at night to care for 89 residents on four floors, according to Dr. Brown.

Humboldt was cited for the violation Nov. 13. "We've been jawboning with them for months, but they haven't done anything about it," Dr. Brown said. Brown said Park House and the two halfway houses had the responsibility to transfer their own patients and residents. "But I have a good crew on the street keeping an eye on them," he said.