

AFTERCARE

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Aftercare is a necessary phase in completing the programme of treatment of an adult or juvenile delinquent. In the following article, Mr. Panakal discusses some of the problems that arise after an inmate is released from an institution and suggests methods of dealing with them.

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Aftercare presupposes the completion of a period of institutional treatment. Therefore, it is a necessary phase in completing a programme of treatment. This article deals with the services that should be made available by the district branch of a state-wide aftercare organisation. These include legal aid, family welfare work, provision of clothing, food, shelter, employment, educational opportunities, additional vocational training, and financial aid to released inmates.

Legal Aid.—The primary functions of an aftercare agency is to aid the ex-inmate when he steps out of an institution and returns to outer life. Though all aspects of legal assistance do not thus come strictly within the scope of aftercare, the agency can still render useful service in this direction. The poorer the accused, the less chance he has of receiving adequate legal assistance. Help, therefore, is imperative in our court system where no expense is spared as a rule in prosecution but hardly any provision is made for the defence of a poor person. Helpless are those accused of serious crimes, with no means to defend themselves properly. Adequate assistance at this stage may obviate the need to send many a man to institutions.

At present, counsels are appointed only to represent an undefended accused charged with murder. In other cases, any voluntary legal assistance given by individuals or groups is generally due to their interest in

social welfare. Where such assistance is not forthcoming, the aftercare services should send legal advisers—paid or voluntary—to ascertain the kind of help required by those undertrials who are not themselves in a position to defend themselves.

The case of a man who has been sentenced to an institution requires further consideration. Institutional personnel do not have the time to give illiterate inmates facilities for preparing their appeals other than transmitting petitions prepared by them or by their friends. The result is that unreasonable and far-fetched suggestions are likely to get into the petitions which are forwarded to the higher courts. In really deserving cases, the aftercare agency should arrange for drafting and conducting appeals. Much discretion will have to be used in rendering this kind of aid. Help could also be rendered in assisting inmates with defence in ejection cases which sometimes are brought to harass families of the agricultural classes.

Family Aspects.—The family is central in our social organisation and, therefore, has an important bearing on subsequent adjustment. The possibility of regaining his position in society depends to a large extent on the family. It is the most powerful influence for restraining him from further delinquent behaviour. In the case of children released from institutions, failure is often the result when the families which **receive them back** lack a receptive attitude.

There are several aspects to the work with the family. Special attention will have to be given to family relationships and the agency should maintain liaison with the inmates and their families. If the inmate is to live with his family, it is advisable for the staff to see them before the individual returns and to urge them for his reception at his home. Even after his arrival, the family often can be of great assistance.

The consequences of prolonged imprisonment of the only or chief bread winner of a family, with no other supporters or guardians, constitute an urgent problem. The family borrows and then begs hoping to look to him for support on his return. Eventually, poverty and suffering engulf the whole family, and sickness born of misery is writ large on every face. Innocent women are left without protection after the breadwinner is interned. Helpless children are emaciated by starvation. The prisoner also may need help in protecting his other assets.

In such cases, the aftercare agency should assume charge as the temporary guardian. The agency should do whatever is possible to meet their needs so that the anxiety of inmates about the fate of their unprotected families may be relieved.

The question of extending the services of the agency to the families of persons in institutions has been widely accepted. In special cases, it is worthwhile to make a grant to the dependents of an inmate who may be in great straits on account of his institutionalisation. Material support given to dependents can only partially alleviate this problem involving many imponderable factors. It is, therefore, essential to offer all necessary assistance, so that the home of the inmate may be preserved from being broken up in his absence.

Clothing, Food and Shelter.—Agencies for enabling ex-inmates to establish themselves

in society shall ensure the satisfaction of immediate needs. Such service which finds expression in various ways of assistance may be rendered in cooperation with kindred organisations. Where a person requires additional clothing to supplement his meagre wardrobe on discharge from the institution, the agency should distribute clothes and, if in bad health, other aids, such as bedding set and a blanket. The agency undertaking aftercare work not only helps to find employment but also makes all arrangements for the individual to live in suitable comfort. If he has no home to go to, or cannot be restored there due to its unsympathetic character or on account of other adverse circumstances, he would be practically forced to stop at the easily available shelter offered by his companion of crime.

Few of them can seek employment but even then they need shelter and food till such time as they get their first wages. For this purpose, homes under the control of the agency should be opened which would cater as mid-way stations for inmates returning from the institutional setting to free society. Here the ex-inmate can be housed while looking out for work or while seeking for a lodging when he has secured employment.

In large centres, such facilities will be useful not only for adults and children but also for accommodating girls who need care and protection even after release from institutions. In the rural areas, away from the industrialised environment, the ex-inmate faces special difficulties. Owing to the small numbers involved, we may again consider herein the possibility of starting *ashrams* which can operate on a self-sufficient basis and along cooperative lines.

The existing facilities operated under public sponsorship are inadequate to make any impression on the aftercare problem. The organisations vested with aftercare

functions should also explore the possibility of using buildings originally built as places of religious worship but are at present vacant or not fully occupied.

While the pattern of providing residence has not proved to be the most satisfactory solution, such facilities should make the transition less abrupt. The ex-inmate should be assimilated back in society without creating fresh problems. New admissions should be studied carefully and individuals who have shown no favourable results in institutions should be permitted to take advantage of this service only under intensive supervision. The staff should see that the service not only has the personal touch but also the discipline necessary for maintaining an organised welfare service.

Preferably, ex-inmates should be allowed residence only temporarily, going on to different places after jobs or other arrangements have been found for them. There is a tendency for quite a number of persons to continue their stay indefinitely without making way for new entrants, the reason offered being the difficulty of finding other accommodation at low rates. Reportedly, some unemployed ex-inmates get indebted to the aftercare agency on account of boarding charges, a factor which eventually affects their adjustment when they start earning.

Employment.—In every aftercare plan, the certainty of securing employment takes a central place, and protection from dependency should be an important aspect of the activities of the agency. During the post-institutional period, direct aid should consist of endeavours to obtain employment and to stimulate them to be self-supporting. The provision of work to enable the individual to earn a living is of great importance especially in the case of those deprived of free life for long periods. Therefore,

after discharge from the institution, there must be adequate and gainful employment.

Gases are reported where the so-called confirmed criminals have turned out to be good citizens, earning their bread by hard manual labour when offered a helping hand. In the absence of employment, an ex-inmate is often compelled to take to crime. Thus the problem of recidivism is bound to rise. Huge expenditure involved in institutional treatment will thus be wasted. Hence the maximum advantage of aftercare work lies in giving work as soon as they arrive from the institution. Society should direct every effort towards securing employment for them.

In many cases, the ex-inmate finds employment for himself. In other cases, he may only need a letter to help him find work. But the solution of the problems of large number is affected by other difficulties in finding employment. In times of prosperity, generally it will be possible to find jobs provided the ex-inmate has certain minimum skills and knowledge. When unemployment prevails, the possibilities in this field become very limited.

In extra-mural life, an ex-inmate sometimes cannot practise his old trade in his village either because conditions have changed or because the villagers do not wish to give him work. If possible, it is better to secure employment before the arrival of the ex-inmate. This is essential for the success of the scheme, but in practice it is impossible to meet such a requirement. As a preliminary to total release, inmates should be sent out for short periods to look for jobs so that the difficulties arising from lack of preliminary contacts between an inmate and a potential employer may be solved.

The problem is more than merely finding employment. When a person has received special training in the institution, he should have ample opportunities to settle down in

a job most suitable to his capacities and interest. It is of little value to train an inmate and at the end find that there is no alternative but to drift and divert from that for which he has been trained. An additional difficulty in placement is the preference of some inmates to find employment in places of their choice.

An individual who is suddenly exposed to the responsibility of supporting himself after a prolonged period of dependency in an institution will find it very difficult to stick to an employment involving very heavy manual labour coupled perhaps with very low income. Further, the man may fail in the first job found for him through lack of adaptability. Thus it is an uphill task which demands the finding of a succession of jobs until he manages to keep one.

Ex-inmates may be given employment in suitable public services. The government is already giving special consideration to economically handicapped persons, such as, the backward classes, displaced persons and other special groups. The same facilities may be extended to ex-inmates who are often more distressed than any of the above categories. Ex-inmates could be safely employed in industrial units run by government so that they may be assured of continuous employment. To this end, the present rules regarding the employment or re-employment of ex-inmates should be liberalised. Employment bureaux should experiment by giving preference to ex-inmates.

A serious obstacle to the proper functioning of aftercare work is the prejudice on the part of private employers against the employment of ex-inmates. It is of particular importance to enlist their cooperation to give employment to a good number of skilled workers. They are shy in giving a job but the agency should work hard to remove discrimination against ex-inmates in matters of employment.

The residential building used during after-care may be fitted with equipment to enable ex-inmates waiting for suitable employment to continue the kind of work they have been carrying on in the institution or to receive instruction in some related or new occupation in order to facilitate their employment. Here, classes may be conducted in cooperation with the Department of Industries of the State Government who may be consulted on the type of industry most suitable to the resources and potentialities of each district so that it will be easy to find market for the products.

Where land is available to be reclaimed and brought under cultivation, inmates who cannot be given suitable jobs may be settled in agriculture. In an agricultural country like India, it should be possible to establish a few colonies where ex-inmates particularly habituals who are trained in improved methods of agriculture but have no land may be given plots reclaimed by them. A good proportion of the ex-inmates must themselves have been agriculturists, either owning or cultivating the soil, who will ordinarily go back to their work in the villages. The starting of such farms for ex-inmates who want to live by cultivation will relieve their problems to some extent.

Educational Programme.—In the residential building, the agency can provide lectures and other cultural activities with a view to developing interest in accepted ways of living so that they would avoid future conflicts with law enforcement agencies. This programme has great potentialities provided the lectures and other activities are properly selected. A large number of ex-inmates will benefit from such instruction planned to create in them a desire for becoming good citizens. The home should be supplied with a radio and games material to make it an appropriate recreation centre for the residents.

The agency should refrain from interfering in religious matters. Religious needs need not be overlooked but they should be dealt with outside the frame work of aftercare. If there is a demand for rendering religious instruction it should be done through other agencies in the community.

Marriage.—In many cases, the real hope of rehabilitation lies in marriage. Some ex-inmates need assistance in obtaining a partner as they have no relatives known to them who will help them to make arrangements. In such cases, the agency can give help in arranging marriages though such help should not be given indiscriminately.

Financial Aid.—If an earning scheme is in force in the institution or the ex-inmate has at the time of his discharge access to funds available from other sources, it is desirable to disburse them periodically through the aftercare agency as seems best in the interest of the individual. When an inmate is released, it is undesirable to put into his hands all the money that is available to him as he might be inclined to spend wastefully. In many cases, the amount cannot be a substantial figure. Unless the money is laid out under supervision, it is not likely to go far in keeping a person between the date of his release and the day when a job is secured for him.

Financial assistance is an important contribution but it is desirable to limit this kind of aid and give it only when and where it is absolutely necessary to put a person on his feet. In addition to maintaining ex-inmates while looking for work, suitable assistance will be rendered if money can be used occasionally to provide him with tools when work has been found. It may even be worthwhile in exceptionally deserving cases to advance a limited amount of capital to set up the person in business.

Besides giving financial assistance, inmates should be encouraged to earn a little more for their maintenance. Suitable work might be assigned to them. Miss Banerjee's home. In any case, the after care medical and always urge the ex-inmates to say welcome and to start a post office savings account.

Creating Public Opinion.—The agency must remain alert to create a favourable public opinion towards the cause of ex-inmates. The general lack of public interest must be set down at least in part to the absence of a well directed and effective educative propaganda necessary to help them realize that the measures for the rehabilitation of ex-inmates are in the interests of the community. It would serve much useful purpose to approach official and non-official persons to popularise this social welfare movement for the rehabilitation of ex-inmates.

This may be done either personally or through letters of appeal. Since the subject of offering assistance to ex-inmates is one which has come to the fore only recently, the agency will do well to circulate bulletins, handbills and posters in the regional languages to arouse interest especially among the relations of ex-inmates. It is also worthwhile to arrange lectures on the subject of aftercare, illustrated with lantern slides or films. The staff of the agency on their frequent tours can address public meetings and also contribute articles on these subjects to newspapers and magazines.

Such an intensive educational campaign is bound to bear fruit and the attitude of indifference, suspicion or hostility towards released inmates may be changed into one of friendliness. Interpretation of aftercare calls for patience and skill on the part of the staff who will be entrusted with the work of building up relationships between the ex-inmates and the community.