

October 28, 1964

Mr. Edward G. Corcoran
Executive Director
Mental Health Association of St. Louis
724 North Union (At Delmar)
St. Louis, Missouri 63108

Dear Mr. Corcoran:

I have read your outline for evaluation of Information and Referral Service with some interest and commend you on your desire to undertake an evaluation of this service. In reading the outline I am struck first by the variety of criteria that one could use to assess such a service. Rather than listing the advantages and disadvantages, I would suggest that the bases for the creation of the service be re-examined and a list of the goals made. These are implied in the questions on Page 2 and 3, but are never stated clearly. For example, the advantage No. 1, that of "immediate attention for anyone" is not a satisfactory criterion since one could say that the telephone company provides the same service and yet this is not what you mean.

I would like to focus on your questions which appear to be quite helpful. Truly the service could be evaluated in terms of question No. 1, 2 and 8. These appear the most helpful and perhaps provide the basis for the evaluation. Question No. 3 is difficult because reference to "a good thing" is ambiguous. If the Committee would define the criterion of "a good thing" then such a question may be answered.

Question No. 4 is a very interesting one and can be the basis for a simple experiment. Without an experiment, I do not see how the question can be answered since it implies a competitive trial of multiple services. This is difficult unless one were to create matched samples and in the kind of work that this service does, such would be difficult. However, it could be possible for a number of patients to call both your agency and a competitive agency and under the guidance of an investigator, keep a

October 28, 1964

Mental Health Association of St. Louis

record of the recommendations. The methods of handling the same candidates could then be compared by your committee. Questions 5, 6, and 7 appear to me to be ambiguous and overly ambitious.

I am returning the evaluation with my notes.

Thank you for your inquiry.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.
Director

mf/lb
enclosure