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31st December 1929.

Dear Sir,

I am directed by the Council of Bedford College to approach you on a matter of extreme importance in the care and welfare of children, namely the specialised training of Health Visitors and other workers engaged in such matters.

The establishment of the Child Guidance Clinic in London is evidence of the active interest of the Commonwealth Fund in this subject and it is in the wish that Health Visitors may be more generally equipped for remedial work such as that at present carried on at the Clinic that my Council desire to bring the following facts to your notice:-

Bedford College has for many years been an approved centre for the training of Health Visitors and is particularly interested in the training of Hospital Nurses for social work in which it has the co-operation of the College of Nursing.

In the Hospital the nurse has received an all round training in the medical and surgical wards and has been engaged in the cure of diseases; as a student in the Public Health course her

attention is directed to the prevention of disease and the importance of attending to early symptoms. After she finishes this course she is mainly engaged in visiting the homes of infants, young children and children of school age. Such visiting is carried on in connection with Maternity and Child Welfare Centres and with Social Medical Service. She has unrivalled opportunities arising out of her daily work of meeting with behaviour problems among children and is often consulted by anxious parents.

If she is to take advantage of the opportunities thus available she must be able to recognise the early symptoms of mental diseases and to know when to refer cases to the proper sources for advice and treatment. No provision is made in the training of English Nurses and Health Visitors for acquiring a knowledge of psychiatry. Financial difficulties make it almost impossible for the majority of nurses to take even the shortest training in general Public Health work.

Scholarships are so few in number that they hardly affect the present situation, which is one of a shortage of fully equipped Health Visitors and an almost complete lack of Health Visitors with a knowledge of psychiatry in addition to general psychology. It is on behalf of nurses desirous of devoting a full year to a general training and, in suitable cases, of taking a further specialised training in mental hygiene that my Council desire your help and assistance. They believe that the value of the work of the trained nurse in Public Health is becoming more

recognised as the scope of the Public Health service is extended, and that her all round experience fits her for many duties. It is this increasing use of the trained nurse which lends importance to the matter of her equipment, and more particularly in all that concerns the maladjusted child, if the opportunities open to her are to be utilised to the best advantage.

My Council therefore feel that financial assistance by way of scholarships or grants is the only way to increase the supply of such trained workers and they believe that by so doing real advance in the work of promoting the welfare of children would result.

In order therefore that more nurses may be equipped by a specially devised course of training scholarships and grants are essential. My Council beg to lay this need before the Commonwealth Fund and earnestly hope they may find it one worthy of their favourable consideration.

I will send by a later mail a copy of the curriculum for a course of special training for qualified nurses as drawn up by a joint Committee of the Council of Bedford College and the College of Nursing.

I am, Sir,

Yours truly,

Dr. Barry Smith.  
Commonwealth Fund,  
578 Madison Avenue,  
Corner 57 Street, New York.

Secretary of Council.