(3) Why VTR?

One of the most effective and exciting tools for this kind of institution building is VTR. We will use VTR as a foundation of the training program. It will be self-discovery through problem solving with the emphasis upon breaking down communications barriers and creating new communications linkages. We will use VTR to open up the information flow - the flow has become channelized and strangled over the years.

Our initial inquiries at X (recorded on VTR) demonstrated that each group - house parents, teachers, social workers, administrative staff ... even the young women themselves had common concerns, complaints and corrective suggestions. Each group spoke of these things from their own frame of reference - and each group felt very much alone in their concerns. Since they felt alone, they also felt powerless to implement their suggestions and exercise their good will outside the definitions of their "roles" as they are conventionally defined by the "system".

The simple process of recording an individual or a small group in conversation or basic role playing situations can break down restricting role patterns and change one's self image. To see and hear oneself is the starting point for constructive change. Along with this VTR recording process goes a subtle sense of power and self-determination. Because each individual (or group) will have the editorial power over what tape is saved and what is erased, the taping process will not inhibit free discussion (this has already been proved beyond a doubt with the tapes which have been made to date). Equally as important is the constant "going on record" which is taking place. The folks in the program will feel an increased responsibility for what is being said. They will feel a commitment to making it work which is not the case where no such process is used.

Recently we did a thorough VTR need assessment. We have a clear idea of what is needed at X. Our role as trainers with a video capability will not be to spell that out; rather, it will be to offer technical assistance to the groups who have asked for it. We will explore the areas of need with them and together come up with creative and constructive answers to their questions within the X context. The houseparents have asked how they can assume a more helping and less strictly custodial relationship to the girls. The teachers are concerned to create an atmosphere more conducive to learning. The social work staff wants some way to insure continuity in their consultation process both on a day-to-day basis and at the final process of review. The administration has expressed the desire to perform more of a developmental role in the institution and to improve the channels of communication. The young women have asked for a greater self-determination function (for growth and self-development).

We will assist these groups individually at first. We will deal with role frustration and seek to clarify the helping relationship in each case. Each group's overriding concern will be to maximize its input in the educational and therapeutic (rehabilitational) aspects of the system and keep the custodial functions to a safe minimum. We will begin to develop group strategy toward this end.

At an appropriate point, we will regroup the participants into the "teams" of cross disciplinary staff who will be working together. The concerns and strategies developed in the earlier groups will be compared and tested in light of the overview provided by the "team" grouping. The teams will begin to work out differences with the members from each category serving as advocate for that point of view.