

Robert M. Quinnelly

1937-2010



Robert M. Quinnelly is the retired Chief of Social Work for the Tuscaloosa Veterans Affairs Medical Center (TVAMC), Mr. Quinnelly's life and character is consistent with the standards of the Social Work Profession. He holds a Masters of Social Work from Tulane University (1963), and graduated from Mississippi State in 1959.

Mr. Quinnelly is being nominated because of the significant impact his professional life has had on the lives of so many veterans, students and fellow employees. He began his career as a social worker in Child Welfare in Mississippi prior to joining the staff at the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center (TVAMC). After working several years at TVAMC, Mr. Quinnelly took a job as the Director of Child Welfare for the state of Georgia. Among several of the innovative programs in which Mr. Quinnelly participated in the development while in his position in Georgia were the Atlanta Youth Pregnancy Prevention Program and a Day Care Program. He lived his Social Work values and his commitment to the well being of children by adopting an infant baby boy.

In 1970, Tuscaloosa VAMC recruited Mr. Quinnelly to return to implement an innovative community mental health program conceptualized prior to his leaving the VA. This program was the Community Services Program (CSP), a community based outpatient mental health program. Initially the program was structured as a hospital based traveling treatment team. Over the next few years the program expanded to include the development of store-front offices in the local community. As the program offices developed into more sophisticated and effective, efficient treatment facilities with Social Work Team leaders, the goals of providing access closer to home, reduction in recidivism to inpatient hospitalization, and intensive therapeutic patient and family care were met. CSP grew into providing coverage through five offices for the northern 31 counties of Alabama and portions of Mississippi (Columbus). The innovative program was the first community-based program in the Department of Veterans Affairs. As such, the national VA Central Office conducted multiple, extensive research projects to determine the efficacy. It excelled in every area evaluated. It served as the prototype for today's Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). Almost every VA Medical Center has at least one community based clinic. "ACCESS" in the community is now part of the VA strategic plan.

As significant a contribution as Mr. Quinnelly's development of CSP has been, it has been equaled by his devotion to the development of competent capable social workers. He had a philosophy and practice of hiring and recruiting the "best of the best" in filling positions and in supporting the Social Work Student Field Placement Program. Following his retirement, he has continued this commitment by working with The University of Alabama School of Social Work as a field liaison.

Mr. Quinnelly has never rested on the laurels of his employment. His level of community work on behalf of others is of paramount significance. Mr. Quinnelly has served in numerous positions at the Chapter and Unit levels of NASW. NASW recognized his professional dedication. He has received the Lifetime Achievement Award and was honored by his peers as Social Worker of the Year on several occasions. His professional contributions have also been recognized by the Alabama Conference of Social Work and the Society for Healthcare Social Workers. Mr. Quinnelly participated in several church sponsored mission trips to help island inhabitants. He has been an ardent supporter of the Hospice movement. He serves on multiple Boards for community service organizations.