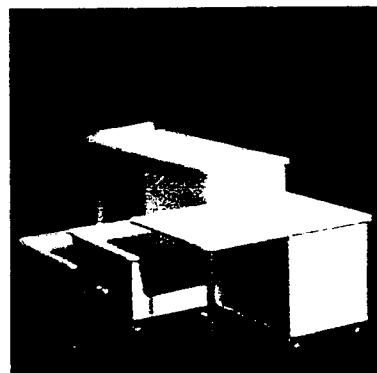


Chapter 1
Executive Summary

Introduction



This monograph presents an inquiry into several of the environmental design issues confronting adult day cares serving the cognitively impaired. As with any critical design exploration and intervention, the problem with which one is confronted needs to be clearly established. This problem exists within a given context whose multiple dimensions need to be understood both discretely as well as how they transact. Once the problem is contextually situated, a method may be established for furthering inquiry and developing and revising solutions to the stated problem in the given context. This approach to critical problem solving was followed in the practicum described herein and is evidenced in the final solutions.

The context of adult day care is quite fragmented. The regulatory context is ill defined, with most states only setting minimal standards for the purposes of certification. These standards often concentrate on issues of life safety and hygiene. The adult day care industry has developed guidelines and standards that are only recently beginning to be adopted and are still found on only a small percentage of operating adult day cares. The funding stream for adult day care is ill defined and highly precarious for organizations seeking to provide this kind of service to their communities. Funding may come from the government, although these funds are usually associated with the provision of highly discrete services, not adult day care in general. Dollars may also come from private foundations, veteran sources, and of course private pay. Many funding streams are associated with regulations that dictate the manner in which care is delivered.

This lack of regulation also impacts the physical setting of adult day care in that "once you have visited one adult day care, you have visited one adult day care." There is a great range in spatial organization, program, and building type in the physical settings of adult day care. Little inquiry has gone into what constitutes adult day care as a place-type. In general terms, issues associated with the physical setting have been limited to appearance, safety, wayfinding, thermal comfort, and sensory stimulation. In the most rigorous and thorough inquiry into the physical setting aspects of adult day care, Diaz Moore (2000) found that there are three primary facets of place quality in adult day care: participant control; social affordance; and adaptability. These three facets are associated with a set of relationships that structure adult day cares as places. The core pattern of this system of relationships is "The Church Basement" which is meant to convey "the concept of a large, undifferentiated space in which different activities take place and from which there is little, if any, variation in activity and degree of visual

exposure.” This character is associated with providing participants with a uniform stimulation level throughout the day, by keeping them within the same spatial confines. Props are usually few and far between and often access is controlled by staff. Such spaces coercively encourage larger group sizes and higher participant – to – staff ratios. Design issues associated with this “place personality” of adult day care include social legibility, socio-physical aspects of group size; and universal design.

These three design issues are addressed by each of the final design solutions presented in Chapter 5. These solutions, developed by 10 students of the Interdisciplinary Design Institute of Washington State University – Spokane, each are crafted with the issues, the context and the problems confronting adult day care professionals in mind. The process for developing these solutions is outlined in Chapter 4. Many professionals were involved in the course of this practicum, interfacing with students to bring a real-life dimension to the problem with which students were confronted. These professionals included adult day care administrators, nursing professionals, social work professionals as well as architects and interior designers who specialize in the environmental needs of those with dementia.

The solutions are grouped into three types of interventions: spatial organization; partitions; and activity furniture. Each intervention is described both verbally and graphically. This is followed by a critical analysis of the intervention in terms of the three design issues central to adult day care for the cognitively impaired mentioned above. Lastly, there is a summative evaluation of how each intervention would impact the three facets of place quality core to adult day care as a place type.

The solutions must not be considered final by any means. As with any good critical inquiry, after initial evaluation, as provided here, additional critical questions are stimulated and further inquiry is necessary. The benefit of this monograph is not in its design suggestions per se, but the issues that they raise to the fore and the potential that exists within them to render adult day cares as places even more therapeutically beneficial.