

Reception Nodes

If patients in a mental health center have to ask directions and be led by the hand to go around a building they will feel humiliated and will not be able to develop a feeling of strength and independence.

Context

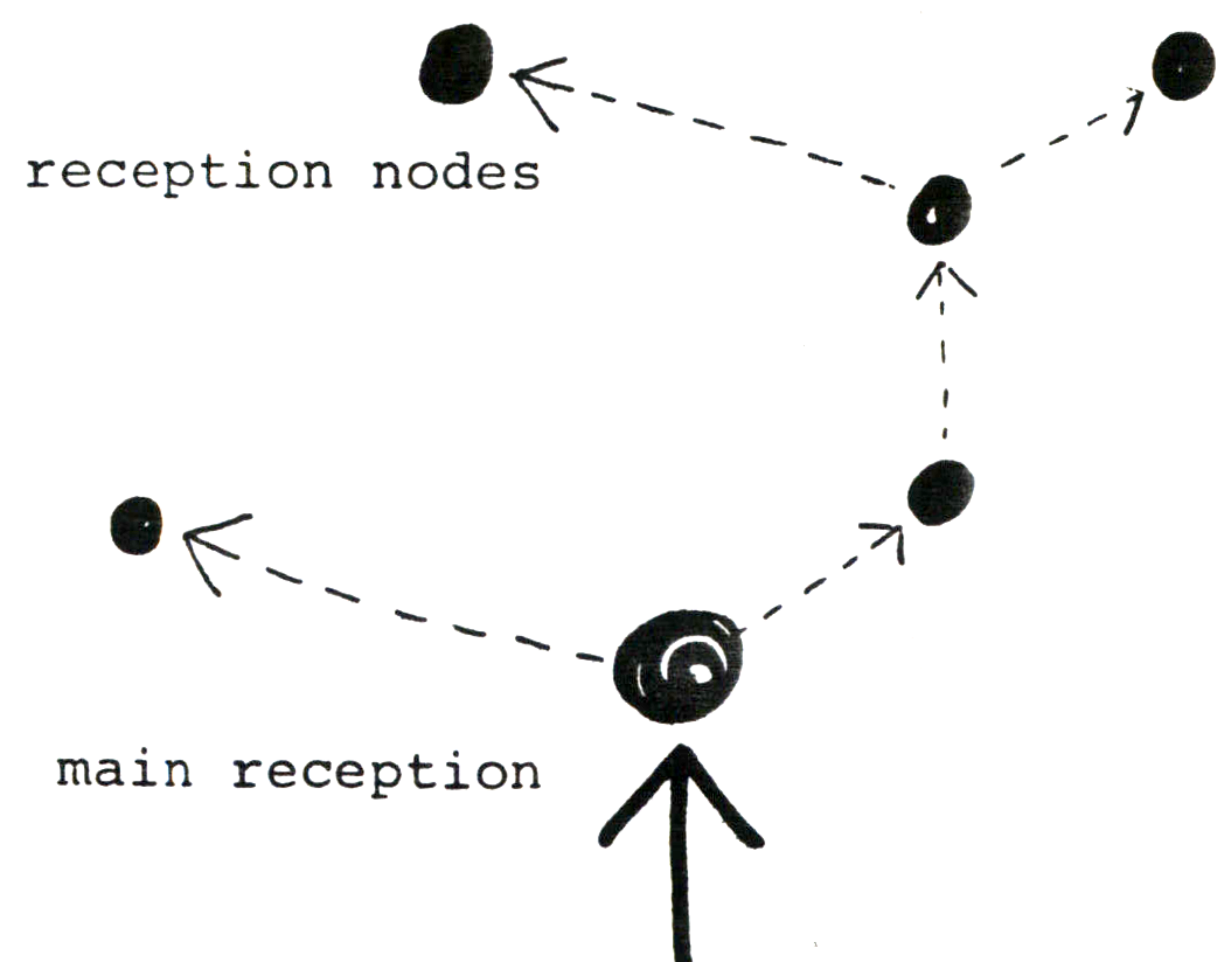
This pattern was originally developed for mental health centers. However, although the problem is especially acute for patients who are mentally disturbed, it seems probable that everyone who has to find his way through a public building experiences the same problem at a subconscious level, and gets frustrated and angry when he can't find his way around. The pattern should therefore apply to any public building with more than one reception point in it.

The system of reception should allow the patient to use his personal and social skills independently if possible. Also, necessary support should exist so that the patient frightened or confused as to time and place does not need to wander about, retreat, or request assistance in a way that reinforces his insufficiency. He neither has to be "led" by the hand to the next place, nor will he be left wandering about without knowing where to go.

Patients must have a very definite

point, or area, of arrival. Hence, there must be *one* clearly defined main entrance, and the reception clearly visible inside this main entrance. Each "next" receptionist the patient is directed to is visible from the previous one. Thus, each receptionist can point, very simply, to another receptionist, and say: "Go and see her, over there". *The patient never has to wander about by himself on unfamiliar territory at any point, yet never has to be "taken" anywhere.*

Therefore: Make all the reception points form a system of mutually visible nodes—so that a person can go from one to the other, always seeing, from each point, to the next point. Make the main reception clearly visible from the main entrance.



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This pattern is tentative. If you have any evidence to support or refute its current formulation, please send it to the Center for Environmental Structure, P.O. Box 5156, Berkeley, California 94705; we will add your comments to the next edition.