

FAILED COMMUNITY PLACEMENTS MOTIVATE MANY GUARDIANS OF DISABLED VICTIMS TO FIGHT

The Murray Parent's Association (MPA) just completed their 40th year of legislative visits to Springfield. Rita Winkeler, Association President, commented that "legislators have always welcomed and respected first-hand information about our loved ones." Winkeler said one goal for the trip was to inform Senators and Representatives about the significant number of Murray residents rescued from failed community placements. "Vulnerable people, important to us, have experienced abuse, neglect, anxiety and fear before finding the correct level of care at Murray Center. And, we cannot accept this special Center being pulled out of the State's service network" continued Mrs. Winkeler. Keeping Murray Center in Centralia open and funded remains a constant request.

The MPA supports stronger community-based options for the disabled, but will not agree to the current trial-and-error transition efforts. Flawed projections and arbitrary deadlines are grave concerns that directly impact the most fragile citizens. After careful and individualized review, Murray families find the Center to be the least restrictive setting for their loved ones. Conclusions are based upon: safety; nursing care; social activities; accountability and expertise of staff.

During committee testimony, Mr. Casey of the Department of Human Services (DHS) admitted that Murray Center cases are challenging. He has also estimated that closure will take 18 to 24 months (starting basically from January 2013). Yet, the State has imposed an arbitrary deadline of October 2013. All Murray residents are expected to move into four bed or less community residences- hardly a full spectrum of person-centered choices. One solution does not fit all!

A study published by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities found that hoped for cost savings in community placement efforts are not obtained when dealing with the most severe cases. The study points out key factors missed by policymakers: a) skewed data due to different levels of disability; b) false claims of taxpayer savings because the community draws from various public funding sources; c) a long overdue effort to raise levels of pay for community providers. State savings projections use changing sets of numbers and are overstated by 30% or more according to estimates available from the MPA.

The Murray Parent's Association invites interested parties to speak directly with the families and guardians of residents. Each member has years of first-hand experience and insight. We are a trusted voice for family members with profound and complex disabilities. The MPA also wishes to highlight the growing national concern about abuse, safety and neglect cases discovered in under-supervised and under-trained settings.

For Further Information, please contact

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Additional information and photos may be found on www.murrayparentsassociation.com

For the study "Cost Comparisons of Community and Institutional Residential Settings" by Kevin K. Walsh, Theodore A. Kastner and Regina Gentlesk-Green please contact Tammie Hopp at 605-399-1624 or thopp@vor.net

