

## KEEP MURRAY CENTER OPEN & FUNDED

November, 2012

The Murray Parent's Association asks for your help in saving the Centralia home of our loved ones from closure. Murray Center is a consensus top performer within the DHS Network! Most of our 400+ members have disabled family, or work with them on a daily basis. We have lifetimes of experience, and are very concerned that closure of the Warren G. Murray Center will increase safety risks for the residents. Another concern is that quality of life will actually decline due to understaffed, underpaid and under-trained community providers. The Connecticut developmental disability system looked at community placement and found that "there is often a relationship between adequacy of (community) facility staffing and staff treatment of individuals." (A)

Governor Quinn is anxious to close State operated facilities (SODCs) and add the MOST fragile and MOST costly cases to the risks and challenges community providers already face. Both the architect of the "Blueprint" (Human Research Services Institute, HSRI) and also the rehabilitation facilities themselves (Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, IARF) have pointed out that investment into community providers must come first- not from after-the-fact and from questionable savings projections. This backward method of change actually puts lives at risk, and this is why our organization must protest!

The Murray Parent's Association asserts that projected cost savings from closures are overstated due to the intensive care needs of many SODC residents. After Georgia shifted to a community setting model, twelve mobile crisis teams and eleven crisis homes had to be funded. Illinois budget projections are not accurate until items like these, plus reasonable reimbursement rates covering increased pay and benefits for a growing and better trained frontline community staff are included. Community-based supports for people with extraordinary behavioral challenges must be available. The success of every individual transition plan is in the methodical detail. In Oregon, and before a person left a facility, community providers also spent two weeks with the client and lived at the SODC. "It turned out to be really insightful." (B)

Abrupt changes to the state's service delivery system, such as facility closures, creates unfunded mandates for local police, paramedics, firefighters and hospitals. The very real scenario of under-staffed community residences calling first responders (\*911) for behavior problems, seizures, etc, is occurring in your communities and places additional demands on local services. First responders deserve training, preparation and communication support for dealing with an increased population of special needs. Frontline residential staff deserve training, reasonable pay and a better crisis plan than peers on-call.

We ask that you exert every possible pressure on DHS to assure that fundamental changes like facility closures occur only after the community infrastructure is in place, funded and actually demonstrating the ability to take on the additional responsibilities and clients asked of them. “It is no wonder that the transition (process) has been fraught with anxiety. The community is simply not ready and families find little solace in saying ‘I told you so’.” (C) Murray Parents cannot accept the self-serving answer of “trust us” from DHS staff and contracted advisors. Murray Center has a documented history of quality and safe care, complete with frequent and extensive inspection. As guardians of disabled loved ones, we are being asked to risk their lives on questionable settings that are not funded, trained, staffed or supervised appropriately. Settings where employee turnover exceeds 40% and where accountability and consistency are perennial problems. Trial and error methods are not appropriate for the fragile and disabled!

Sincerely,

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- (A) VOR Weekly News Updates, 8/7/12, [www.vor.net](http://www.vor.net): VOR, based in Elk Grove Village IL is a long-time advocate, “speaking out for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities”
- (B) National Council On Disability, May 2010, Portland OR
- (C) Ann S. Knighton, President of VOR, Elk Grove Village, IL

Murray Parent’s Association is a non-profit organization founded over 40 years ago with the purpose of assisting and caring for those with complex and profound disabilities. MPA is a trusted voice for loved ones who call central and southern Illinois home. Murray Parent’s Association may be followed on Facebook.

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