



Save Residents' Homes at Developmental Centers

Contact Information:

Sherrie Preische

preische@spmsolutionsllc.com

732-236-7834

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Families' Statement Following Christie Administration Announcement of Developmental Center Closing Dates

Trenton, New Jersey (February 27, 2014) – We are shocked by the Christie administration's announcement this week that both North Jersey and Woodbridge Developmental Centers will be closed by the end of this year. We know that most residents who have been moved so far have been moved to other Developmental Centers in the state, serving only to rip the residents further away from their families.

Residents who have tried community group homes and have not done well are not allowed back into Developmental Centers and many are ending up in the state's Psychiatric Hospitals. The Psychiatric Hospitals are not prepared to care for developmentally disabled residents. The training that the staff has at Psychiatric Hospitals is very different from the training at Developmental Centers.

In addition, in the past when a resident moved, there was follow up by staff who knew the individual to make sure the resident was doing well. The policy this year when residents move is that they are cut off from all care-givers who know them. The follow up is only from a "transition management team" who have no prior knowledge or experience with the resident. There is not even allowed to be communication with the doctors who have treated them. No one who cared for the resident in the past is allowed to follow up. This is tragic because these are residents who cannot articulate their own needs and rely completely on staff who surround them and understand their needs.

Residents have already died after being moved because not enough information follows them nor do the people that know them.

The state clearly does not have a proper transition plan to safely move residents to new residences. This is a very sensitive population that has difficulty with change. Ripping them away from both family and care-givers who know them does not allow the residents to acclimate to new settings and becomes dangerous to their health and well-being.

“This decision to close the centers immediately is devastating for the residents”, said Joanne St. Amand, President of the Woodbridge Developmental Center Parents Association, “as it rips them away from all care-givers who know them: both from family members who will not be able to visit them as regularly and from staff care-givers who know their individual needs and are like family to the residents. We know that there have already been serious consequences with previous transfers and feel strongly a timetable at this speed will cause even more individuals to die, be injured or end up in psychiatric hospitals than have already taken place in the first two years since announcing closure.”

We call on the Legislature to demand a plan from the Administration detailing both where residents who have already been moved are living now and where the remaining residents will be moved and how their safety will be assured when care-givers who know their needs are not being allowed to follow up or communicate the residents’ needs and the residents themselves are not capable of articulating their needs.

While Governor Christie says he does not want to “institutionalize people”, he has not bothered to visit these residences, which are communities to those who live there, in order to understand why the residents require the care they receive and that is not available in group homes. Governor Christie says that he won’t let a vocal minority stop him. We say it is fortunate that only a minority of New Jersey families have a family member so disabled that they have a proven need for the high level of care given by Developmental Centers. While we are a minority, we still have a voice and our issues are still New Jersey issues and should still be addressed and not swept under the rug because some people in government do not want to deal with them. The strength of our voice should not be measured by our numbers but by the great need that our family members have for constant care.

Finally, we point out again: the only people who are advocating for the closure of Developmental Centers are “financial stakeholders,” that is providers of community homes and services, who would benefit financially from building more homes and expanding their services. We are not financial stakeholders, we are family stakeholders and these actions will directly affect us and our families.

See our opinion piece here:

http://blog.nj.com/njv_guest_blog/2014/01/save_njs_centers_for_the_disab.html

Save Residents’ Homes at Developmental Centers is a coalition of families, friends and caregivers of the residents of New Jersey’s Developmental Centers. We know that NJ’s Developmental Centers provide the best care for our loved ones. Family members should have the right to choose where their loved ones live to best meet their individual needs and care, not Trenton bureaucrats.

The Mission of *Save Residents’ Homes* is to keep all of New Jersey’s Developmental Centers open as a life-saving choice for our most severely intellectually disabled individuals and their families.

www.saveourddcenters.org

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