

Illinois: Jacksonville Developmental Center Closure Advisory Committee Demands Answers

*The following is a letter sent to **Kevin Casey**, director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Illinois Department of Human Services, by **Rita Burke and Wayne Ryerson**, members of the Jacksonville Developmental Center Closure Advisory Committee. Burke is also the President of the Illinois League of Advocates for the Developmentally Disabled, a statewide advocacy organization and VOR-affiliate representing residents of Illinois' state-operated developmental centers (ICFs/MR) and their families.*

December 10, 2012

Dear Director Casey,

As members of the Jacksonville Developmental Center Closure Advisory Committee, we were notified by email on December 3rd that the December 12, 2012 meeting was cancelled due to "scheduling conflicts." As of today, we have not been notified of a rescheduled date.

This is alarming to us because since our last meeting, JDC was emptied and we have been informed that as many as 30 JDC residents were moved wholesale out of the facility to other SODCs as a temporary measure in order to close JDC by an arbitrarily determined date. This is certainly not on the person-centered timeline you promised.

You need to account to your stakeholders about what happened and why. To our knowledge the only vehicle established for DHS/DDD to report to invested family/guardian stakeholders like ourselves is the JDC Closure Advisory Committee.

You may recall that during the early stages of the JDC closure process, we complained bitterly to the Governor's office, to you and to the JDC ombudsman, Anne Shannon, that we believed the process was intentionally opaque. To quell our complaints, we were eventually invited to be members of a newly-formed JDC Closure Advisory Committee.

We are perfectly aware that the Committee received little hard evidence of the consequences of the closure on particular individuals, as DHS/DDD could claim that HIPPA requires confidentiality. We, instead, were provided only raw numbers in categories, including police interaction, hospitalizations, etc. As we expressed to you, even without the personal stories, those raw figures alarmed us.

Now we are worried that the closure process and the consequences to fragile people is once again hidden behind an opaque curtain.

It is our firm belief that shuttering the doors of a facility like JDC is not the end of their story. We want to know what happened to whom and why it was so important to close the facility before people were ready and facilities were prepared to accept them. We understand that, for some, this hurried move will require yet another traumatic relocation to a more permanent setting.

No matter how euphemistically this process is sold to the public, to families and guardians it appears to be dollars, date and ideology-driven, rather than care and person-centered.

Committee members should expect to hear from you without delay about the rescheduling of the December 12 meeting and future meetings to assess the outcomes of the JDC closure process.

Sincerely,

Rita Burke
Wayne Ryerson

CC:

Senator John Cullerton
Speaker Michael Madigan
Senator Christine Radagno
Representative Tom Cross
Senator Sam McCann
Representative James Watson
Representative John Cavaletto
Representative Patricia Bellock
Senator David Luechtefeld
Senator Gary Forby
Representative Brandon Phelps
Representative Michael Bost
Representative Pam Roth
Representative Rita Mayfield
Representative Robyn Gabel
Senator John Sullivan
Senator JamesClayborne
Senator Kyle McCarter
Representative Paul Evans
Senator Mike Frerichs