Georgia State Report

By Komala Balakrishnan

East Central Regional Hospital is a government supported facility. It has two campuses. The one in Gracewood houses individuals who are severely and profoundly intellectually disabled, some of them physically disabled as well. The other campus is in Augusta where individuals with mental illness reside.

The 420 acre Gracewood campus was established in 1921. In the Gracewood campus there are several buildings and cottages, most of them not used now and are deteriorating. Only two buildings are being used as living areas. Then there is the administration building and the auditorium for special events. Activity areas are located in one of the wings of the same building where the living areas are located.

ECRH is accredited by the Joint Commission on the accreditation of Health Care Organization under the standards for Hospital, Behavioral Health Laboratory and Long-term Care.

As of January, 2020, there are 93 individuals in the ICF-MR setting and 25 individuals in the Skilled Nursing Facility setting. The average age of the residents is somewhere between 60 and 65. In the recent months residents were moved from one building to another or from one wing of a building to another wing of the same building due to dwindling population. Currently there is no push to move them into the community. There is no place in the community where such services as required by ECRH residents exist. ECRH supports and provides for them in the least restricted and the most integrated environment.

ECRH has on site doctors and nurses. Its direct care staff are well trained. They are the ones who know the residents well. Family members can call the living area anytime and enquire about their loved ones well being. We love ECRH staff.

The residents participate in a number of activities such as the annual prom, Special Olympics, Christmas tree-lighting and Christmas parade.

They get to go off campus to the fair and to the restaurants for lunch.

Representatives of the Gracewood Family Council attended the 2019 Annual VOR Initiative. During that time, they got the opportunity to meet with DOJ regarding the status and future of the State of Georgia about its care for the Disabled. In February 2020 representatives from the Family Council made a trip to The Capitol to meet with the Governor, Brian Kemp and the Director of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Ms. Pat Fitzgerald. They were able to meet with legislators.

The Gracewood Family Council met in July 2019 and January 2020. The meeting in April 2020 was canceled due to Covid-19. In October 2019 was the Gracewood Family Council picnic which was well attended. The ECRH administrators have put in place precautionary measures to protect the residents from getting Covid-19. The living areas were disinfected by members of the National Guard. The staff use masks and their temperatures are taken as soon as they report to work.

Visitation from family members have been suspended. Off campus activities for residents have been suspended. One wing of a building has been designated to be used for quarantine in case any individual shows symptoms of having the virus. One wing of a building has been designated to be used for quarantine in case any individual shows symptoms of having the virus. The residents are being taken care of as best as possible. As of today, there are no cases of Covid-19 among the residents nor staff thanks to the precaution they are taking to keep our family members safe.