Report from ILLINOIS
By Rita Winkeler, State of Illinois Coordinator

The census of the State Operated Developmental Centers (SODCs) in Illinois has remained stable for the past six years. The state SODC census ending April 30, 2019 was 1, 672. The census as of May 1, 2020 is 1667. The state has moved some individuals from the SODCs to private ICFs or Community Integrated Living Arrangements (CILAs- group homes), but as they have moved residents, other individuals have taken their place in the SODCs. Private providers in Illinois have made it very clear to the Department of Human Services that will not provide services for the most seriously behaviorally challenged individuals as they do not have the resources to provide proper care for these individuals This refusal to provide services is in part due to the Chicago Tribune series of articles, and continued articles about the lack of oversight of the CILAS in Illinois, and to the Attorney General of Illinois's' audit of the CILA system in Illinois (July 2018) which showed a large amount of abuse/neglect, and a lack of oversight in the community system. Providers do not want to be held accountable for abuse/neglect, and now have the right to refuse services to disabled individuals who seek services in their homes. The Department of Human Services has also made it easier for providers to evict individuals who due to their medical or behavioral disabilities have caused problems in their CILA homes.

Murray Center, where our son resides, has had twenty admissions in the past year. All of these but two have come from failed CILA placements. In the past four years 65 residents have been admitted to the center. The seven state-operated developmental centers have admitted over 80 individuals in the past year. Several individuals have transitioned from each center, moving to small community group homes. Individuals, too as they have aged have passed away, so the census remains stable. The state has also budgeted and spent a considerable amount of money on the infrastructure at the state centers, something that had not been done for a decade at some centers.

Currently, over 24,000 Illinois disabled individuals are serviced through the Division's Medicaid Waiver program. At this time, there are over 24,000 on the Prioritization for Urgency of Need for Services (PUNS) List – disabled individuals waiting for services. There is a 5-7 year wait before receiving services under the Medicaid Waiver Program. The Ligas v. Hamos lawsuit, was filed on July 28, 2005, on behalf of adults with developmental disabilities living in private, state-funded Intermediate Care Facilities for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (ICFs/DD) who want to move to community-based services or settings and on behalf of adults with developmental disabilities living at home who want community-based services or settings. In June 15, 2011, the Ligas v. Hamos Consent Decree was approved by the Court. The goal for this year is to move 700 disabled individuals from ICFs to smaller community homes. It has proven difficult for the Department of Human Services to move the required number of residents from ICF placement to community placement each year, as parents/guardians are refusing to move their wards, as they prefer ICF services instead of community services. Under the Ligas Consent Decree guardians have a right to refuse community services, and continue ICF services. At this

time there are over 200 private ICFs with the capacity for over 4,500 residents. Most of these homes are not filled to capacity, and many have converted from ICFs to smaller CILA homes.

Funding in Illinois for all DD/ID services continues to be a constant struggle. The minimum wage in Illinois has risen to $15 an hour, effective January 2025 and the hope is that this raise in wages will help elevate the lack of Direct Service Personnel. The new administration in the Department of Human Services has been very transparent in working with families whose loved ones live in the SODCs. They continue the past goal of moving individuals from large centers to small group homes, but also recognize the need for the large centers. Recent legislation has been passed that has increased the pay wage for DSPs, and as part of that law the money must go to DSP salaries, not to the agency provider. A law was also passed allowing cameras in the bedrooms in the private group homes, private ICFs, and SODCs. The COVID-19 has put a halt to all other legislation. Prior to COVID-19 there was a push for the closure of the workshops, and a push for more funding for Money Follows the Person. The emphasis now is getting the state back to “normal” for those individuals living in the SODCs, and the small community homes.