VOR- Nebraska State Report June 2020

Nebraska has one state operated ICF, the Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC). Over the years BSDC has been downsized and currently there are about 100 individual residing there. There are no plans for new admissions and it seems to most of us that the State is waiting for the population to age out or dwindle to the point that keeping BSDC operational is no longer feasible. We are pleased to report that as of this writing there have been no cases of Covid-19 at BSDC. However, the strain of isolation and lack of family access is increasingly difficult.

There are a couple things that make BSDC unique. About 10 years ago, during a time of crisis, the State decided to operate BSDC under 5 small ICF licenses instead of the one they had, which was being threatened by CMS and the Department of Justice. Thus, if there is a problem in one area it can be better contained while allowing the other areas to continue operating. So far this has been a good working solution for us and it has given the regulators some flexibility.

The State is also utilizing BSDC on an emergency basis to serve high need individuals experience crisis in the community. Currently one of the 5 ICF licenses at BSDC is for these individuals and the State has identified a need for more services in this area. Thus, their plan is to shift the focus to serve more individuals with high behavioral needs for the short term, while attempting to stabilize them with the goal of placing them back in the community. The reality is that some individuals fail upon reintroduction into settings with less support.

Meanwhile, community services in the developmental disabilities area are growing but still fall well short of being able to support high need individuals with complex health and behavioral challenges. There is a waiting list for community services of over 2000 individuals, and like elsewhere, this is a recurring focus of various stakeholders.

The next couple years are critical. This year the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services must provide an update on DD services to the State Legislature. We expect them to report their plan to expand the emergency behavioral support services at BSDC as the number of more traditional residents dwindle.

Finally, next year will be an election year with a new governor and likely new DHHS administrative executives which is always a time of uncertainty. In addition, the Director of DD Services for our State, who had been an accessible and supportive person, recently left for a position at the federal level, which adds increasing uncertainty about future direction. Most parents and guardians are grateful for the relatively quiet/stable year we have experienced but all are concerned about the long-term viability of BSDC.

Respectfully submitted, Margaret (Peg Huss), Omaha, Nebraska