

Georgia State Report - June 2021 By Komala Balakrishnan

East Central Regional Hospital (formerly Gracewood State School and Hospital) is a state operated Intermediate Care Facility. The state closed the facility to new admissions about twenty years ago. As a result of the Settlement Agreement with DOJ, during the past decade a number of residents were moved to community homes. Many of them died in a short time apparently due to not having the supports they needed. Now they have slowed down the push to community placement. With no new admissions and the transfer of individuals into community homes the numbers are dwindling. The number of individuals in Gracewood facility now stands at 87 in the ICF and 21 in the SNF.

During the Covid surge in 2020, the Gracewood administration and staff observed strict protocols to prevent the spread of the virus to our family members. We thank them for their tireless effort trying to keep the residents healthy, safe and in good spirits during that time when there were no visitations from family members.

Visitations started in April 2021. Family members are allowed to visit twice a week for two hours each time in the reception area. Family members are still not allowed to take the residents off campus. All indoor activities are taking place as usual. They recently had the annual prom. They also get to go for nature walks around the building.

Two chief administrators either quit or were let go and now we have a long time senior employee promoted to Interim Gracewood Administrator. Two medical doctors retired. Don't know who will replace them. A number of new direct care professionals are being hired.

As there was no VOR annual conference in 2020, three members of the family council along with Mr. Dwyer met with DOJ on June 25, 2020 via conference call. The executive committee of the family council held meetings via conference call four times since the last report; in June, November, January and April.

There is a proposal to use some of the Gracewood property for veteran's cemetery. The Gracewood Family Council opposes this move.

Representatives of the Gracewood Family Council attended the VOR 2021 Virtual Conference. We were successful in getting the opportunity to meet virtually with representatives from the offices of eight(8) of the congressmen.