

VOR Report – State of Arkansas
June, 2022

I. Arkansas’ public ICFs.

- a. There are five state-operated intermediate care facilities (see description below).
- b. The state has a policy of open ICF admissions, including admissions for eligible individuals under the age of 18.
- c. Each of the 5 public ICFs is licensed by CMMS (Centers on Medicaid & Medicare Services) through annual unannounced state surveys; in addition, each center is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

Following description is from a recent submission to a U.S. Senate committee:

Arkansas families of individuals with life-long profound disabilities will forever be grateful for the state’s intermediate care facilities. The majority of Arkansas ICF residents are non-verbal, or communicate with great difficulty, functioning in the profound range of cognition, with slight or little awareness of danger. The five state-operated human development centers (HDCs) are licensed intermediate care facilities (ICFs) and provide residential training and treatment for over 850 individuals with profound cognitive and developmental disabilities. The HDCs, located in Conway (Faulkner County), Booneville (Logan County), Arkadelphia (Clark County), Warren (Bradley County) and Jonesboro (Craighead County), provide irreplaceable services for vulnerable persons from throughout the state. The HDCs are foundational components of the state’s human service system. In addition to the public ICFs, there are twenty-seven private intermediate care facility (ICF) programs. If any of the ICFs were to be downsized or eliminated, our citizens, current and future, with life-long cognitive and other developmental disabilities would suffer. Further, any closures would be economically devastating to the areas in which the five public centers are located.

II. Some items which have worked well for Arkansas families.

1. Active statewide parent-guardianship association.

In response to a class action lawsuit, the late Bill Sherman and others formed a statewide parent-guardianship association in 1991, which continues to be the framework for our advocacy, state and federal. Families & Friends of Care Facility Residents (FF-CFR) Executive Committee is comprised of four officers, the presidents of each of the 5 centers and other members at large. There are 20 members serving on the FF-CFR Board of Directors. At present, we have inactive parents’ associations at two of the five centers.

The FF-CFR Board meets quarterly. FF-CFR has an annual membership meeting.

The FF-CFR Executive Committee maintains an active e-mail conversation about state and federal issues which affect our family members with disabilities.

2. Advocacy work.

In our individual advocacy work, we always advocate:

for the intermediate care facility (ICF) system (the 5 centers), rather than our family members' individual ICF and

for all eligible individuals (present and future) for ICF programs, rather than for our individual family members.

3. Actions to assist all the centers.

Two of the 5 centers have inactive parent-guardian associations, and the FF-CFR Board has worked to strengthen them by attending their parent-guardian meetings and by advocating for the centers before their communities' leaders and before state legislative members from the areas. We have worked steadily over 10 years for capital improvement funds for one of the oldest centers and last month, on May 18, we attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony of two new living quarters on that campus. Previously, some of the older buildings on the campus had been demolished and removed.

4. Up to date Contact information.

We have collected many, many e-mail addresses from the five centers' families. FF-CFR secretary, Jan Fortney, is critical to the organization. Jan does a wonderful job of maintaining the e-list and she sends "action alerts" through e-mail when needs arise. She also sends hard copy messages at least annually, to the membership.

5. Arkansas General Assembly and Administration.

A small core of FF-CFR members lives in the Little Rock area, and we strive to attend key legislative committees, House and Senate, which are most likely to address ICF issues. We keep in touch with the Governor's liaison to the legislature. The Arkansas Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) is one of many divisions under the Department of Human Services. DDS is governed, however, by a Governor-appointed DDS Board. FF-CFR members strive to attend the quarterly DDS Board meetings.

6. State Policies.

We work to be informed about division policies which might affect the viability of the centers. These policies include (1) steady capital improvement funds for all five centers; (2) open admissions to qualified individuals, including persons under the age of 18; and (3) adequate pay for staff.

III. Some suggestions.

- (1) Consider forming a statewide parent-guardian association/work group.
- (2) If there is no active parent-guardian association, work to identify at least one family/individual from each of your centers who will agree to be the contact person for that center.
- (3) Work to build a statewide e-mail list for the centers' families; continuously collect e-mail addresses.
- (4) Identify state legislative committees which have oversight responsibilities for the state's centers. Analyze the committees: are there members who have centers in their districts? Form an advocacy group of families/center representatives and make appointments with legislative committee Chairman and Ranking Member. Ask for their support and advice for the continued operation of the centers. Ask for a hearing in which to provide information about your centers, their residents and the need for them.
- (5) Identify local community leaders in the areas where centers are located – mayors, chamber of commerce directors, city managers, bankers, clergy. Be informed on each center's financial impact on the local community. Invite area leaders to the centers. Work to keep them informed of the centers' vulnerable residents and the need for center services and provide information about the economic “footprint” of the centers.
- (6) Encourage your families to create one page family story-sheets with photographs of their loved one with disabilities. Ask them to contact their legislators for advice and support in keeping the centers adequately funded and operational. Use the story-sheets as leave-behinds in legislative meetings.
- (7) Ask your families to broaden their requests, requesting that other family members and friends contact legislators in support of the centers.
- (8) Touch base with advocates who are working to maintain 14 c programs – many of the same federal organizations which work to undermine and eliminate the ICF programs are also working to eliminate the 14 c programs.

Respectfully submitted,

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