

State Report for Illinois 2023

Bills that were passed 2023:

- Illinois advocacy groups such as They Deserve More asked the legislature for a \$4.00 increase in salary for DSPs. An increase of \$2.50 was approved: \$1.25 increase for base wage; \$1.25 increase to be used more flexibly to help retain employees.
- The Department of Human Services must establish throughout the state short and long-term stabilization homes for those with severe behavioral issues.
- Bills were passed to help create DSP training programs in high schools and state-supported community colleges.

Pending bills:

- The push to end allowing use of 14C certificates to allow employers to pay less than minimum wage to disabled workers failed to pass. It will likely pass in an omnibus bill.
- Chicago has been phasing out its 14C programs over the last few years. Gov. Pritzker gave an executive order to phase out 14C state contracts.
- Safety bills proposed by Rep. Charlie Meier include that would require for CILAs:
 - Unannounced site inspections.
 - Authorization for video cameras in common living areas.
 - Reports of violations in CILAs within 5 days of occurrence.
 - Inspector General must act within 5 days of report.
 - CILAs must report any 911 calls (passed)

Choate Developmental Center:

Choate Developmental Center, one of seven SODCs in Illinois was prominent in the news in 2023. There were reports of beatings of residents, efforts by staff members to cover up the abuse, and intimidation of employees who reported the abuse.

Due to these reports, The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) has decided to “re-purpose and re-structure” Choate in collaboration with Southern Illinois University.

The number of residents will be reduced by half over the next 2-3 years- some into state-supported centers, others into community-based settings. Five residents have already been moved into Murray Center, with plans for 120 individuals to be moved there in the next 2-3 years.

IDHS says Choate has been heavily scrutinized for over 20 years by state and federal authorities and Equip for Equality.

This is all part of a broader plan to expand services for people who want to live in the community and ultimately reduce the number of people in the remaining DD centers.

Staffing

Staffing at group homes, ICFs, and state ICFs continues to be a problem across the State. Several group homes and ICFs have closed in the past year due to lack of staffing. Many of these individuals have moved to state developmental centers, as community providers have acknowledged they are not able to meet the needs of these individuals.

At this time the number of individuals living in state developmental centers remains steady at 1,650. As individuals leave the centers for small group homes, they are quickly replaced by other individuals waiting for services.

Roslyn Leehey
Rita Winkeler