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April 3, 2015



Speaking out for people with intellectual & developmental disabilities



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**Reminders:
Help VOR Grow!**

VOR Weekly News Update

News and views for VOR Advocates

VOR is a one-of-a-kind nonprofit organization. If you value our work, please help support it by [donating](#) now.

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[VOR Conference](#)

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Early Bird Registration Deadline Extended! Now April 8, 2015

VOR and YOU

1. VOR's Annual Conference Early Bird Deadline Extended by One Week. There is still time to save! [Register now!](#)
2. Deadline for [submitting Senate Testimony](#) is rapidly approaching: TODAY AT 5:00 pm Eastern

STATE NEWS

3. **Illinois:** Groups vastly differ on closing of developmental centers
4. **Georgia:** Gracewood parents brace for move out
5. **Massachusetts:** Guardian rights bill would help families caught in the State's probate system
6. **Massachusetts:** Baker administration

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continues Gov. Patrick's misguided effort to close sheltered workshops

7. Louisiana: Arc of Acadiana Northwest undergoing transition - but not everyone thinks it's for the best

LEGAL NEWS

8. Supreme Court Rules Against Disability Providers

QUOTABLE, by Stephen Fry

Calendar Reminders

COMING UP: VOR Submits Testimony Calling on Senate to Stop Funding Forced Deinstitutionalization

VOR and YOU

1. VOR's Annual Conference Early Bird Deadline Extended by One Week. There is still time to save! [Register now!](#)

Recognizing that the upcoming holiday meant that many of you are busy with family and friends, VOR is extending the early bird registration deadline by one week.

Participants who [register](#) by **Wednesday, April 8, 2015** can still take advantage of the early bird registration rate before the fee is increased. Although registration will stay open until April 30, by registering early you save.

[Full details are available on VOR's website.](#) While visiting with family and friends for the Holiday, please share with the information [about VOR](#) membership and our Conference!

Thanks to the many of you who have already

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registered. We look forward to seeing everyone in Washington, D.C. this June.

2. Deadline for [submitting Senate Testimony](#) is rapidly approaching

There are just a few hours remaining to tell the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education and Related Agencies to prohibit HHS agencies from using their federal funds in support of forced deinstitutionalization.

The Senate Subcommittee will not accept testimony after 5:00 pm eastern (2:00 pm pacific / 3:00 pm mountain / 4:00 pm central / 5:00 pm eastern).

[Click here for template testimony.](#) Submit your testimony **by Word attachment only** to lhhs@appro.senate.gov (Subject Line: FY16 LHHS OWT)

THANKS to the *many* of you who have already submitted testimony!

STATE NEWS

3. Illinois: Groups vastly differ on closing of developmental centers

**Illinois News Network (Springfield, IL) *
March 31, 2015**

A coalition of advocates for the developmentally disabled is calling for the eventual closure of six of seven of the state's residential centers.

The Going Home coalition is not proposing legislation this session and it's not saying which of the existing centers should remain open.

But the coalition's proposal is not without opponents and, in fact, reveals a divide in the community of developmentally disabled people and their families.

[Read more, COMMENT and share](#)

4. Georgia: Gracewood parents brace for move out

Augusta Chronicle * March 29, 2015

Note: [This article is one of several in a series](#). Theresa Senior, featured in this article, is a long-time VOR member who has attended [VOR's Conference and Congressional Initiative](#) for years. VOR President Ann Knighton's daughter, Erica, also calls Gracewood home.

Theresa Senior pulls into her driveway then opens the backseat door, where a pair of little black boots appear, and Terral Senior hops out onto the driveway.

Patients at the Gracewood facility in Augusta are next to be moved, and family members fear their loved ones could meet a similar fate as others in Georgia.

The mother of an 18-year-old developmentally disabled patient who died is still searching for answers and can't get his records from state bureaucrats.

That's something Terral, 57, couldn't do more than two decades ago before she went to the Gracewood wing of East Central Hospital. Her mother fears she will regress and might be harmed if she is ever forced to leave the facility for a group home in the community, as the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities apparently plans to do.

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The state “is telling us nonsensical things,” Senior said. “Telling us things they are going to have, but they don’t have any of them.”

But it is not clear that the state has a choice and when it begins to transfer patients again, it will begin with the Augusta area, which worries parents at Gracewood.

[Read more, COMMENT and share](#)

5. Massachusetts: Guardian rights bill would help families caught in the State’s probate system

***COFAR Blog* * March 23, 2015 * by David Kassel**

As we have chronicled a number of times, family members can get shut out of the process when their loved ones with developmental disabilities enter the state’s system of residential care.

This is particularly the case when family members lose their legal status as guardians of disabled persons. That, as we have seen, can happen for reasons that are not always fair or just.

That’s why we strongly support a bill (H. 1459) now before the state Legislature that would require probate court judges to give more consideration than they now do to the appointment of family members as guardians of incapacitated persons.

The bill, which has been filed for years by

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Representative David Linsky, has never made it out of committee. We understand, though, that the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council, which advises the state on issues of concern to the developmentally disabled, has put this bill on their priority list for passage this year.

The bill states that the spouse, parent or parents or their designees of an incapacitated individual should be presumed to be suitable guardians unless competent evidence is introduced to the contrary.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

6. Massachusetts: Baker administration continues Gov. Patrick's misguided effort to close sheltered workshops

***COFAR Blog* * March 16, 2015 * by David Kassel**

As the Legislature takes up Governor Baker's budget for the coming fiscal year, it looks as though the battle over sheltered workshops for the developmentally disabled in Massachusetts is set to begin once again.

Supporters of these vital programs won a reprieve last year when the Legislature inserted protective language for the workshops in the current-year budget. The language prohibits the Department of Developmental Services from closing or cutting off funding for sheltered workshops as long as there are people who seek them or wish to remain in them.

The budget language temporarily thwarted the efforts of then Governor Patrick to close all remaining sheltered workshops in the state as

of this coming June. But the protective language has been removed from Governor Baker's proposed budget for fiscal 2016.

It appears that despite the fact that we have a new governor, it is the same DDS with the same administrators running it; and they will never back away from their ideological opposition to any program that serves more than a handful of disabled individuals in one location.

Sheltered workshops provide settings in which developmentally disabled people can do assembly jobs and other types of work. In the view of the now Baker administration, such settings of care "segregate" developmentally disabled people from their non-disabled peers, and supposedly prevent them from reaching their potential in the mainstream workforce.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

7. Louisiana: Arc of Acadiana Northwest undergoing transition - but not everyone thinks it's for the best

KTBS 3 (Bossier City, La.) * March 29, 2015

The state of Louisiana has been getting out of the business of delivering health care for years now, and shifting services to the private sector has changed the way services are delivered.

Though it's about Medicaid reimbursement rates, it's really impacting people. Some people born with developmental disabilities don't have the ability to achieve independence - and facilities like Arc of Acadiana Northwest in Bossier City, privatized a few years ago, care for them.

But now. the Arc is in a transition period. Like

many facilities across the state and nation - is moving in a new direction.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

LEGAL BRIEFS

8. Supreme Court Rules Against Disability Providers

***Disability Scoop* * March 31, 2015**

Developmental disability service providers cannot sue to force state Medicaid programs to raise their reimbursement rates, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled.

In a 5-4 decision Tuesday, the high court ruled against a group of Idaho agencies serving people with developmental disabilities.

The service providers had argued that the state failed to raise Medicaid payments as outlined in a federally-approved formula for years even as such agencies faced rising costs.

But, in a blow to the providers, the Supreme Court ruled that private companies currently lack any right to enforce Medicaid requirements. Rather, it is up to the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services to ensure that states comply with the program's rules, the court said.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

QUOTABLE

"Self-pity will fulfill all the prophecies it makes and leave only itself." ~ Stephen Fry

Calendar Reminders:

EXTENDED!

**EARLY BIRD DEADLINE FOR VOR's
CONFERENCE IS APRIL 8, 2015**

Sunday, June 7, 2015:

**[VOR Annual Conference: ADVOCATING FOR
CHOICE BY EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES. Registration
Open.](#)**

Archives:

* **Thursday, March 20, 2014**

**[VOR's "Regional Meetings: The Need for Advocates to Act
Global and Local" Webinar.](#)**

***Social Media Strengths: Using Facebook and Twitter to
Advance Your Cause (VOR, July 2013).** [Visit VOR's website for
a copy of the powerpoint presentation and an audio of the event.](#)

* **How Congress Works Webinar: [Recorded - Listen
Here.](#)** Tuesday, April 23, 2013 - 12:00 pm central / 1:00 pm
eastern. How Congress Works: The Basics. Hosted by Peter
Kinzler and Larry Innis.

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