



Speaking out for people with intellectual & developmental disabilities



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VOR and YOU

1. POLL: SHOULD STATE BE ALLOWED TO MANDATE MOVES INTO GROUP HOMES?

NJ Spotlight * August 14, 2014

Should 'intellectually disabled' people be allowed to stay in developmental centers or out-of-state facilities, if that's what their families prefer?

Last week, Gov. Chris Christie conditionally vetoed legislation that would have limited the state's ability to move people with intellectual disabilities into group homes.

[Click here right now for more background and to share your opinion.](#) NUMBERS COUNT!

2. VOR State Coordinator Circulates Workshop Petition

**From Bob Wood, VOR Connecticut State
Coordinator**

My daughter cannot work in the community and needs the day long programs that she gets in a sheltered workshop. My daughter attends a VARCA workshop in Derby and has been there for over 20 years and loves it. The President as well as state government is trying to close them saying they are segregated.

[Click here for further background and please consider signing this petition.](#)

3. Wisconsin: Not a good 'choice' for some

**Journal Sentinel (Milwaukee, Wisconsin) * August 10, 2014 * By Rebecca Underwood, VOR State
Coordinator**

I was left so unsettled when I read the perspectives of advocates who seem to harbor

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a deceptively narrow definition of "choice" (["Improving lives of people with disabilities,"](#) Perspectives, Aug. 1).

For more than 30 years, I have been an advocate for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. By no coincidence, my son is 34 years old. Our son brought out the advocate in me, and while he remains my greatest motivator, I see the world outside him. Not everyone needs the highly specialized, total care he needs. Honoring choice based on uniquely individualized needs underpins my advocacy.

Advocates who wish for all people with disabilities to have a key to their home and a typical job have not met my son and his peers. My son, whose cognitive abilities are like a 3-month-old, does not process bed times or what's on TV. Staff at Central Wisconsin Center tend to residents' daily survival, ensuring their well-being and comfort. Advocates who characterize specialized, 24/7 care as expensive and segregated, advance, perhaps unintentionally, a perspective that sacrifices people like my son for their version of the greater good, a disservice to human rights and true choice.

Read related editorial here: [State plan will hurt people with disabilities](#) (*Journal Sentinel*, August 6, 2014)

FOCUS ON NEW JERSEY

4. Christie's veto is a cruel blow to the disabled: Opinion

***NJ.com* * August 13, 2014 * By Assemblyman
Patrick J. Diegnan Jr. (D-Middlesex)**

There really is no place like home.
Home is happiness. Home is safety. Home is love and care. For hundreds of our state's most vulnerable residents, North Jersey Developmental Center was home.

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Will Bequest**

The eviction notice Gov. Chris Christie sent these men and women in 2012 gave them less than 30 months to replace what some had called home for 30 years.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

5. Families angry Christie vetoed, demanded changes to bills determining where disabled people will live

NJ.com * August 12, 2014

Despite earning overwhelming support in the legislature, two bills that would have given families a greater say in where their loved ones with developmental disabilities live and what level of care and supervision they receive have been rejected by Gov. Chris Christie.

The governor conditionally vetoed one bill that would have halted the state Department of Human Services' plan of transferring about 470 developmentally disabled people living in out-of-state centers — some for decades — into state facilities.

Christie also conditionally vetoed a bill, (S2158) that would have required the department to provide a comparable level of care and supervision in privately-operated group homes to people coming from state-run institutions, known as developmental centers.

The same level of care would be provided, "where feasible," according to the veto statement.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

6. Following Christie vetoes, families of intellectually disabled fearful of future

NJ Spotlight * August 12, 2014

Governor's actions could pave way for forced

group-home placements for people currently in out-of-state facilities and developmental centers.

Gov. Chris Christie's conditional vetoes of measures that would have limited the state's ability to move people with intellectual disabilities into group homes has left some families fearful about what will happen next.

The vetoes apply to two separate bills: S-2158/A-3418, which would have placed a moratorium on residents at out-of-state facilities being transferred back to New Jersey, and S-2249/A-3475, which would have required that residents of developmental centers slated for closures remain within 30 miles of those facilities.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

7. Why States Can't Manage Private Contractors

Governing * August 5, 2014

(Editor's Note: This article focuses heavily on New Jersey hiring private contractors to carry out state business, including but not limited to case management for people with developmental disabilities. The article also cites examples from California, Idaho, Oregon, Texas and Vermont).

Hurricane Sandy victims were improperly denied grant money to rebuild. Criminals escaped from halfway houses and committed murder and assault. Case managers for people with developmental disabilities failed to file accurate reports about their visits with clients.

Those were some of the findings of a recent Rutgers University study, which concluded that for years, New Jersey officials did a poor job overseeing state contracts with outside firms.

The [review](#), which examined how New Jersey procured and monitored contracts, determined that oversight failures not only wasted taxpayers' money but put some of its most vulnerable residents at risk.

“The state engages in oversight by audit and exposé. It’s a ‘gotcha’ way to do it,” said Janice Fine, an associate professor at Rutgers’ School of Management and Labor Relations who co-authored the study. “I was shocked by how little oversight was happening in real time, as opposed to after the fact.”

And the report took the state’s developmental disabilities agency to task for failing to adequately manage its contracts, saying it wasn’t able to ensure that services to clients were being delivered as required.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

Related from Governing Magazine:

[Outsourced Government: Have We Gone Too Far?](#)

[Contractors, Quasi-Public Agencies Avoid Scrutiny, New Studies Show](#)

STATE NEWS

8. Massachusetts: New State background check law has delayed requirements

COFAR Blog * August 14, 2014

A [new national criminal background check law in Massachusetts](#) may well have a major, positive impact on services and care for people with developmental disabilities in the state.

But under the law, the background check requirement is delayed for many, if not most, current employees in the Department of Developmental Services system for more than four years, until January 2019. The requirement is delayed for a year and a half for prospective employees in the system.

The long-awaited law, which was signed by Governor Patrick last week, authorizes national criminal background checks for persons hired to

work in an unsupervised capacity with persons with developmental disabilities. The law will ultimately require that both current and prospective caregivers in the system submit their fingerprints to a federal database maintained by the FBI. The law applies to DDS employees, employees of corporate service providers to the department, and caregivers over the age of 15 of persons living at home.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

9. Illinois: Could group home get the city sued? Not allowing them got other metro-east towns taken to court

News-Democrat (Belleville, IL) * August 9, 2014

As the Belleville City Council weighs the rights of disabled residents to live in a group home versus the concerns of homeowners in that same subdivision, aldermen also are considering the legal consequences of their actions.

Aldermen plan to take up the issue Aug. 18 after residents of Green Mount Manor subdivision have a chance to meet with providers of the Community Integrated Living Arrangement for voluntary mediation.

Homeowners in the subdivision in Ward 7 expressed various concerns over safety, property values and the CILA provider's credibility. During the Monday meeting, an alderman asked for legal guidance on the issue.

"I would like to know the legal ramifications for the council, for the city if we yay or nay on this type of thing," Ward 4 Alderman Jim Davidson said. "What are our responsibilities?"

In response, City Attorney Garrett Hoerner said he would recommend that the council discuss that type of analysis in executive session.

Mayor Mark Eckert said Wednesday that the council and most residents understand the council has to be fair and follow the law, such as the Fair Housing Act.

“The city attorney tried the other night to allude to the law without trying to scare or threaten people, and the council members have to think about it,” Eckert said. “Recent cases do tell us about having to be fair.”

Eckert was referring to a federal lawsuit settled for \$50,000 in January after the Hecker Village Board denied plans to build two four-person group homes for the developmentally disabled.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

10. New York: Family of Group Home Residents in Bronx Claiming Abuse

WABC 7 (Bronx) * August 8, 2014

Family members of mentally challenged adults make disturbing claims of abuse against a group home.

State investigators are now confirming that they are looking into at least two incidents at the Union IRA home in the Bronx involving alleged staff abuse. Investigative Reporter Sarah Wallace spoke with devastated and outraged relatives.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

QUOTABLE

“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.” ~ John Muir

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Calendar Reminders:
Sunday, October 5, 2014

American Health Care Association's 2014 ID/DD Residential Services Day during AHCA/NCAL's 65th Annual Convention & Expo at the Gaylord National Harbor just outside of Washington

DC. Registration information and the schedule can be found [here](#).

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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