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Speaking out for people with intellectual & developmental disabilities



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**Reminders:  
Help VOR Grow!**

February 28, 2014

## VOR Weekly News Update

News and views for VOR Advocates

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## VOR and YOU

**1.** [Facebook 500! We are almost there! Help VOR reach 500 Likes Today! Click here.](#)

**2.** **VOR's team credited for helping secure good outcome in Wyoming**

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**Background:** *The following letter was received this week from Connie Howard, VOR's Co-State Coordinator in Wyoming, expressing gratitude to VOR for its help with advocacy in support of the Wyoming Life Resource Center. This week, the Governor's budget which supports ongoing WLRC operations and important and necessary capital improvements secured support in the legislature. VOR did help, but it was very much a team effort. **Julie Huso** spoke to the families and toured the Center late last year, and **Connie Howard** and **Shawn Humberson**, Co-State Coordinators, visited with Legislators and encouraged **many other families** to do the same. Most recently, **Tamie** helped set up an Action Alert specifically for Wyoming families and advocates and many Wyoming residents responded, resulting in constituent-directed letters to Wyoming legislators. **VOR is family. VOR is a team.***

February 24, 2014  
Dear VOR.

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I want to thank you - a "thank you" seems so insignificant - for all of your help and support this past year. As we move on with the next phase, I know we would not have been so successful in getting Governor Mead to see the need of updating the facility to serve all of the people in the state without VOR's help in keeping us focused on our goal and the positive attitude.

Governor Mead has put millions in the budget for Wyoming Life Resource Center (WLRC) but there could be a deduction if the summer fire season is bad. Otherwise funds seem to be secured for WLRC through 2016.

We will now move to the specifics for each component of the work, which should be developed with appropriate Level I reconnaissance and Level II Feasibility Studies.

I feel now that with the new health care facility in the plans, along with all the other improvements that it will be an asset that will fill lots of needs for all of citizens of WY.

I will send you a hard copy of the Facility Report. I think it is very good for WLRC and for "A State Facility."

Thanks again to VOR for your devotion to the DD Community and your guidance.

Sincerely,

**Connie Howard**

VOR Co-State Coordinator

### QUALITY IN THE COMMUNITY?

**3. National: "Widespread Abuse, Neglect and Death in Small Settings Serving People with Intellectual Disabilities" (February 2014, VOR)**

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VOR's "[Widespread Abuse, Neglect and Death in Small Settings Serving People with Intellectual Disabilities](#)." document provides a bibliography of

investigative media series, state audits and peer-reviewed research in more than half the states that detail systemic concerns with regard to quality of care in community-based settings for persons with developmental disabilities.

Tragedies range from physical, emotional, and financial abuse, neglect and death. Many of these outcomes are associated with a zest to move to a "community for all" vision people with developmental disabilities without adequately considering the ramifications of separating vulnerable people from specialized care and then doing away with a critical safety net (deinstitutionalization).

The lessons learned from more than 30 states should cause policymakers and lawmakers to take pause and recognize that a range of needs requires a range of service options.

#### **4. National: Crime Odds Nearly Triple For Those With Disabilities**

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***Disability Scoop \* February 25, 2014***

The U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics said Tuesday that there were 1.3 million nonfatal violent crimes against persons with disabilities in 2012, up from the roughly 1.1 million estimated for 2011.

The findings come from the National Crime Victimization Survey, which is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and asks about experiences with crime — whether reported or unreported to police — among those age 12 and older living in the community.

Individuals with disabilities encountered violent crime at nearly three times the rate of those in the general population, the [report](#) found. Simple assaults were the most commonly cited crime against this group followed by robbery, aggravated assault and rape or sexual assault.

Those with cognitive disabilities had the highest rate of victimization and about half of

violent crime victims with disabilities had multiple conditions, the Bureau of Justice Statistics said.

[Read more, comment and share](#)  
[Read the Justice Department's Report](#)

## **5. California: More Information Needed on Level of Abuse and Neglect at Community Homes**

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*Parent Hospital Association / Sonoma Developmental Center* \* February 20, 2014

Concern is growing among family members and advocates that the safety of those developmentally disabled folks still resident in California's state-run developmental centers is threatened -- not because of conditions at the centers but by the prospect losing the centers' protections when residents are moved into the community.

[Read more, comment and share](#)  
[Very Compelling Video \(NBC newscast\)](#)

## **6. California: L.A. suit accuses unlicensed care facilities of abuse**

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*Los Angeles Times* \* February 18, 2014

A pastor and his wife are accused of abusing the physically and mentally disabled residents of their two care facilities in the Adams district.

Swarms of flies filled the living areas. Broken furniture was scattered, bedroom doors were missing and plaster was falling off the walls, according to court documents. Some residents slept in bunk beds crowded into small rooms with 1-inch pads instead of mattresses. One resident lived in a "storage room" and others in an attic.

On Tuesday, Los Angeles City Atty. Mike Feuer said his office had filed a lawsuit against

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the two unlicensed assisted-care facilities for allegedly abusing their physically and mentally disabled residents by forcing them to live in "deplorable, overcrowded and substandard living conditions" and taking the residents' government benefits."

[Read more, comment and share](#)

### **7. California: Police: Embezzlement from disabled went on for years**

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***The Press Democrat (Sonoma, CA) \* February 22, 2014***

For at least seven years, embezzlement suspect Larry Gene Sark forged signatures onto the backs of thousands of checks made out to developmentally disabled clients of the North Bay Regional Center, a case management agency which arrange for community-based services for people with developmental disabilities. He then deposited them into his personal bank account, according to a Santa Rosa police investigation.

Months of poring through the man's credit card history and his JP Morgan Chase bank account showed a long-standing pattern of embezzlement totaling almost \$400,000, Santa Rosa detective Sgt. Phil Brazis said.

The money was taken from 51 Sonoma County residents.

[Read, comment and share](#)

### **8. National: Schizophrenic. Killer. My Cousin.**

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***Reader's Digest \* February 2014 (reprint of original article in *Mother Jones*. May/June 2013 \* by Mac McClelland)***

***Byline: It's insanity to kill your father with a kitchen knife. It's also insanity to close hospitals, fire therapists, and leave families to face mental illness on their own.***

"You can call the police." the deputv director

of Sonoma County's National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), David France, said when I asked him what options are available to a parent whose adult child appears to be having a mental breakdown. "The police can activate resources," like an emergency psych bed in a regular hospital, or transport and admission to a psychiatric hospital in a county that, unlike Sonoma, has one. But only if the police decide your child is a danger to himself or others can they arrest him with the right to hold him for three days—what in California is called a 5150, after the relevant section of state law. Otherwise you can be turned away for lack of space even if your loved one is willing to be admitted, or be left no good options if they're not. Ninety-two percent of the patients in California's state psych hospitals got there via the criminal-justice system.

[Read more, COMMENT, and share](#)

**Related: TIMELINE: [Deinstitutionalization And Its Consequences: How deinstitutionalization moved thousands of mentally ill people out of hospitals - and into jails and prisons](#); and MAP: [Which States Have Cut Treatment For the Mentally Ill the Most?](#)**

### **STATE NEWS**

**9. New Jersey: Christie administration announces dates to close two institutions for disabled**

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*NJ.Com* \* February 25, 2014

The Christie administration informed union members today, and by letters this week to families, that the North Jersey Developmental Center in July and the Woodbridge Developmental Center in July 2015. The closures are opposed by families of the residents who live in these two facilities and

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filed a lawsuit last year to block them.

[Read more, COMMENT, and share](#)

## **10. Illinois: Rep Meier: State dishonest about payments**

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**WJBD News (Salem, IL) \* February 25, 2014**

State Representative Charlie Meier is accusing the Department of Human Services (DHS) of lying to the public about the frequency of state payments to Community Resource Associates, Incorporated (CRA). He says the records show that CRA has received more than \$4 million since February 2012 to try and herd Murray Center residents out of their home and into community placements where their well-being and safety are at risk.

Meier says a review of payments issued by the State Treasurer's office reveals that claims by the State that CRA is receiving delayed payments like other vendors is not true. In fact, CRA had been paid fairly consistently since February 2012. In the five months were payment was missed, it was made up for in the next month by double payments. Other vendors, including hospitals, nursing homes, day cares, schools and a wide variety of other vendors in Illinois have to make due with extremely late payments for their services. In some cases, Meier says they have been forced to lay off employees or close their doors permanently because of the state's fiscal condition.

[CRA has been contracted by the state](#) to transition individuals from Jacksonville and Murray Centers, a contract which has been [opposed](#) by Murray resident families and friends.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

## **11. Illinois: Editorial response to Missy Kichline editorial on Murray---Stop using people as political pawns**

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**Submitted by Christine Chalkey (Streator, IL) to the *Belleville-News Democrat* \* Feb. 23, 2014**

Like Ms. [Kichline](#), I have a child, now adult, with a developmental disability (DD) and have over 18 years of volunteer, non-paid work, advocating for the rights of all disabled under Americans with Disabilities Act. And, I support and respect others right to choice, regardless if it differs from mine.

My child does not reside at Murray or any other long-term state-run care center called an institution. Also, I do not sit on any Illinois state agency board, or work for any state or state-funded agency for DD. I just want to get the whole truth out.

The truth is that closing Murray or any other DD institutions in Illinois is eliminating the right of residential choice clearly outlined in a Supreme Court Decision and protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act. And, for some Illinoisans with DD, and their families, institutionalized residency is their only choice.

Residential choice for those with DD was defined and is protected by the 1999 [Olmstead vs. L. C.](#) Supreme Court Case. Olmstead states that "Each disabled person is entitled to treatment in the most integrated setting possible for that person--recognizing that, on a case-by-case basis, that setting may be an institution." Other residential choice include living at home, community assisted living center or group home.

Why, then, would anyone deny another person's right to choice? And, why would those employed, and paid with tax payer's money, to uphold and defend the rights of the disabled

advocate and encourage violating a Supreme Court decision?

Perhaps the answer lies in asking who will truly benefit by closing Murray. And, from what I have found it isn't the residents of Murray or their families. The [truth is that there is much more to the Murray story](#) than what the State, and other state-funded agencies and advocacy groups wants to tell.

I also find it shameful and utterly indefensible that anyone would use the most vulnerable of all society as political pawns; especially, when, ironically, it is the DD leaders, state and agencies who are playing with the lives of the most vulnerable and our families.

**[Related editorial: "Home is Where the Heart is," by Rita Winkeler, President of the Murray Parents Association.](#)**

## **RESOURCES**

### **12. The National Autism Network**

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Worth checking out, from National Autism Network:

“The [National Autism Network](#) is the largest online resource for the autism community providing the only HIPAA Secure social network, nationwide provider directory, events calendar, discussion forums, autism news, expert written content and thousands of resources. Our mission is to unite and empower parents, providers, family members and individuals on the autism spectrum by providing a growing community rich in knowledge and expertise with a common goal of working together to make a difference in the lives of those affected by autism. We are all in this together as one community!”

### **Quotable**

*“I would rather have one rose and a kind word from a friend while I'm here. than a whole truck load when*

*I'm gone.* ~ Unknown

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**Calendar Reminders:**

**Tuesday, March 25, 2014**

**AHCA/NCAL's fifth annual "ID/DD Residential Services Providers Hill Fly-In."** Questions? Dana Halvorson, [dhalvorson@ahca.org](mailto:dhalvorson@ahca.org).

**June 8, 2014**

**VOR 2014 Annual Conference and Initiative:**

*"Making it Happen: Reforming Policy and Law in Support of Person-Centered Quality and Choice"; Hyatt Regency, Washington, D.C.*

**Register today!**

**Week of June 9, 2013**

**VOR 2014 Congressional Initiative:** Families and advocates visit Capitol Hill.

**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 will open in Spring 2014.

**Archives**

**\*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.

VOR  
836 S. Arlington Heights Rd., #351  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007

Tel: (605) 399-1624  
Toll Free: (877) 399-4867  
Fax: (605) 399-1631  
Email: [info@vor.net](mailto:info@vor.net)

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