



Speaking out for people with intellectual & developmental disabilities



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VOR Weekly News Update

News and views for VOR Advocates

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VOR and You

1. [Long-time VOR Legislative Committee Chairman, Peter Kinzler, announces his retirement; hands baton to David Hart](#)

VOR * July 19, 2013

Peter Kinzler “retired” from his career two years ago, but never really retired.

Following retirement, Peter increased his volunteer activities on behalf of VOR, serving as Chairman of VOR’s Legislative Committee, a post he has held for the past 6 years. While helping VOR navigate complex Congressional

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waters, he was also working alongside families in Virginia in their efforts to effectively respond to a Department of Justice and State settlement agreement that threatens four state centers. Peter serves as the group's legal liaison, helping to secure intervention in the federal lawsuit, and with other families has also met with DOJ lawyers, state legislators, and others.

All this, while trying to enjoy "retirement."

On June 8, Peter took one step toward true retirement, announcing his resignation as Chairman of the Legislative Committee. Even as he announced his retirement as Legislative Committee Chairman, however, he signaled his intent to remain involved as a Committee member, for which VOR is grateful.

"I will remain involved," remarked Peter. "The time is right, however, for me to step aside and let another Chair lead this committee. I'm grateful to Committee members for their hard work which has enabled VOR to be so well known and influence our cause so effectively. We are a credible resource, due largely to our status as family members, our compelling message, and the hard work this Committee."

David Hart, a VOR Board Member and long-time Legislative Committee member from Massachusetts, has been selected as Peter's replacement. David was appointed by Ann Knighton, VOR President, who consulted with Peter.

"David has committed a lot of time and energy to this Committee and over many years," said Tamie Hopp, VOR's Director of Government Relations and Advocacy. "He's attended the VOR Conference and Initiative annually for more than a decade and he is fully informed on VOR's current and past legislative priorities and strategy. Most importantly, he demonstrates an

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ability to engage Committee members in decisions and implementation. He's a perfect fit to fill Peter's shoes."

In addition to the Legislative Committee and the VOR Board of Directors, David serves on the Issues Oversight Committee and has served on the VOR Membership and Government Affairs Committees. He's the President of [CCMR, Inc.](#), a VOR affiliate in Massachusetts, and is an employment specialist, helping identify vocational opportunities for people with disabilities. He also works with [Tailored for Success](#), a nonprofit founded by his wife, Elizabeth.

VOR members and staff wish Peter well as he continues to reach for some semblance of retirement, and offer sincere gratitude for his many years of service and his willingness to remain involved. Likewise, VOR is grateful to David for his willingness to step into this new role.

"While change can sometimes be difficult, this transition is expected to be relatively seamless," remarked Hopp. "We have a deep leadership bench, which is to the benefit of our cause."

2. Autism Housing Survey: VOR members encouraged to respond

Autism Speaks * July 2013

Editor's Note: VOR members with family members with autism are encouraged to respond to this survey so that there are multiple voices expressing the need for an array of residential options for this population.

Autism Speaks Launches National Housing and Residential Supports Survey

Within the next decade, more than 500,000 individuals with autism will enter adulthood. Finding and securing housing and residential supports for adults with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) can be extremely challenging for individuals and their families. Autism Speaks seeks to quantify and characterize the housing needs of individuals, adolescents and adults with autism in the United

States through the first-of-its-kind [National Housing and Residential Supports Survey](#). Please respond by August 9, 2013.

State News

3. Illinois Procedural Victory! State ordered to disclose info in Murray Center lawsuit

Sentinel News * July 19, 2013

The federal lawsuit against the closure of the Murray Developmental Center gained some more momentum this week as a judge ordered the state to turn over pertinent information as part of the discovery process.

A status hearing was held Wednesday in the case in preparation for the upcoming preliminary injunction hearing. At the hearing, attorney Judith Sherwin, representing the plaintiffs including the Murray Parents Association, the Illinois League of Advocates for the Developmentally Disabled, and individual family members of residents at Murray Center and six other state-operated developmental centers, argued that process was being hindered by the state withholding necessary documents.

“We’ve been having some difficulty getting information out of the state that we feel we should be entitled to in connection with the discovery process,” Sherwin explained Thursday. “The judge issued an order requiring the state to give us most of the information we asked for.”

The information includes all documented evidence and answers to written questions regarding their policy and actions which led to the state’s decision to close Murray center as well as the effects of closing the Jacksonville Developmental Center. Judge Marvin Aspen granted the plaintiffs’ motion.

Sherwin said, “We’re very happy with this action because discovery had come to a screeching halt. In addition, because the discovery process has been so bogged down, the preliminary injunction hearing that was set to begin next Tuesday will have to be rescheduled.”

Tuesday’s hearing will now be used for another status hearing and to set a new date for the preliminary injunction hearing.

“The judge will lay out a discovery schedule so there will be no repeat of these problems,” Sherwin said.

In May, Aspen granted the plaintiff’s motion for a temporary restraining order preventing the state defendants including the Illinois Department of Human

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Services from relocating Murray Center residents to community integrated living arrangements (CILAs) until a ruling is made on the motion for preliminary injunction.

[Read more, including court documents](#)

[Read Related News From Real Care Choices Blog - Share and Comment: Families Fight Back \(July 11, 2013\)](#)

Read Related News: [Group home for former Murray residents doors away from sex predator \(July 18, 2013\)](#)

4. Virginia: [Coercion by the State not Acceptable](#)

***The News & Advance* Editorial Board * July 18, 2013**

The state and federal governments should be looking out for the best interests of the dwindling number of profoundly mentally and physically handicapped residents being cared for in training centers around Virginia.

But they aren't doing that. In fact, it seems that some in government at both levels will stop at nothing to achieve their goal of emptying and putting under lock and key the five remaining Virginia training centers. The residents would be moved to smaller group homes in which the bureaucrats controlling their fate claim they would fare better.

So, to that end, a state agency has written letters to families of residents at Central Virginia Training Center and other institutions pressuring them to move their relatives out of the centers and into smaller group homes.

Coercion should have no place in the lives of families whose loved ones live at and are being cared for at the training center in Madison Heights or at the other state training centers.

Yet, parents of residents report that a state agency that goes by the awkward name of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services has sent letters pressuring them to move their relatives from

CVTC and other similar institutions to smaller group homes. The letters are an unacceptable turn of events for these families.

[The families have written a letter of their own](#) to Gov. Bob McDonnell asking him to stop the coercion they are getting from state government. The letter from parents groups at four training centers asks the governor for his help to “immediately stop all efforts to coerce” families of training center residents “into accepting community placements for their loved ones.” A McDonnell spokeswoman said the governor’s office was reviewing the concerns expressed in the letter.

Sadly, the parents and guardians have every right to be worried about the future of their relatives. An agreement reached last year between the state and the U.S. Department of Justice would close four of Virginia’s five centers, including CVTC by 2020.

Federal officials have said the residents would fare better in smaller homes where they could expect to have more contact with the community than in the larger training centers. Those same officials have overlooked the fact that the smaller homes will not offer the same level of care received in the training centers.

The parents’ letter said that pressure on the families is coming from DBHDS officials in Richmond.

State officials have not confirmed anything about the future of the Madison Heights facility except to say they plan to close it last. The number of residents there has dropped to about 300, down 50 in the past two years. Jane Powell, a CVTC representative who signed the letter to McDonnell, said she thinks “CVTC will apparently be the repository of nearly all evicted occupants” of other training centers around the state.

But throughout the more than decade-long debate over the future of training center residents, the state has been less than forthright in its dealings with the residents and their

families. State officials have shown little interest in the concerns expressed by parents. The parents are asking that their relatives be allowed to remain in the safe environment some of them have had for decades.

Isn't that the least the state can provide for those unable to live on their own?

[Read here and share](#)

5. New Jersey: Developmental center families promote cause with billboard

Sentinel * July 17, 2013

Families of Woodbridge Developmental Center residents have installed a billboard outside of Trenton. The families continue to ask Gov. Chris Christie to visit the Woodbridge facility on Rahway Avenue and the North Jersey Developmental Center, Totowa, and meet their loved ones. Both facilities are slated to be closed over the next five years. The families argue that the medical needs of the developmental center residents and the desires of their family members were not taken into consideration by the state task force that recommended the closure of two developmental centers in a 2012 report. They also argue that, by closing the two centers in the northern part of New Jersey and moving residents who require these services to the southern part of the state, the residents will be moved farther from their families and support networks. A lawsuit is pending.

[Read more, share and comment](#)

6. Inclusion in Wisconsin? Neighbors fear violent felon locked in Baraboo home

WMTV (NBC) (Madison, WI) *July 18, 2013

Wisconsin Department of Health Services Deputy Secretary Kevin Moore said in a letter to legislators that the state pays Care Wisconsin \$3,432.43 per month per member, but resources committed to each individual can vary. The man in Baraboo is watched by at least four staff members 24 hours per day.

Prompted by concerned neighbors, Sen. Jon Erpenbach (D-Middleton) and Rep. Fred Clark (D-Sauk City) are wondering why the state does not require licenses for violent felons like the man in Baraboo and whether an alternative placement would

be safer for the man and his neighbors.

"Any time you can get someone with disabilities into a community setting, that's the best thing for everybody, it's a win-win for everybody," said Erpenbach. "In this particular situation with the violent nature of this individual, and I can't stress this enough this individual requires four staff members within this house dressed in kevlar so they are not harmed to deal with this particular individual, there might be a better way to deal with the whole situation."

[Watch video, read more, share and comment](#)

7. Massachusetts: The life, death and *home* of June Bug

***Boston Globe* * July 11, 2013**

Father Bill Schmidt, the pastor at St. Mary's in Wrentham, got the call a week ago. There was an 85-year-old woman at the Wrentham Developmental Center, the old Wrentham State School, and she didn't have long.

Father Bill was led to her bedside. Her name was June Larner, and she was in and out of consciousness. Father Bill spoke to her softly, soothingly. He told her that God loved her. He anointed her, making the sign of the cross, and told her that God was ready to call her home.

When he finished his priestly duties, Father Bill stepped away and talked with some of the staff members, who stood in a clot, concerned.

"Does she have family?" Father Bill asked.

She did, he was told, but they were all gone.

And then Father Bill heard the whole story.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

Quotable

"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples" -
Mother Teresa

Calendar Reminders:

*** How Congress Works Webinar: [Recorded - Listen Here.](#) Tuesday, April 23, 2013 - 12:00 pm central / 1:00 pm eastern**

FREE WEBINAR: How Congress Works: The Basics.

Hosted by Peter Kinzler and Larry Innis.
* **AHCA/NCAL to host Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD) Day – October 6, 2013.** [Details online.](#)

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