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Speaking out for people with intellectual & developmental disabilities



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**Reminders:
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March 28, 2014

VOR Weekly News Update

News and views for VOR Advocates

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VOR and You

1. **Midnight (Eastern) Tonight Deadline: [Take Action Now - Tell Congress to Stop Funding Deinstitutionalization](#)**

The House Appropriations' Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee is considering its Fiscal Year 2015 budget. The Subcommittee is receiving input from the public this week via a hearing and written testimony.

VOR feels strongly that no federal agency should define "choice" so narrowly and illegally as to disenfranchise the most vulnerable segment of our disabled population.

[If you agree, BY MIDNIGHT \(Eastern Time Zone\) TONIGHT \(MARCH 28\) please support VOR's testimony with a letter of your own. It's easy to do. Click here for a template letter.](#)

Please [take action](#) right now. You will **not** be able to after the Subcommittee's deadline.

Thank you!

Share! Please share the [link to this Action Alert](#) with mention of the deadline via email and social media. Numbers count!

2. Early Bird Registration Deadline Approaching Fast: Register Now and Save!

The VOR's 2014 Annual Conference, Making it Happen: Reforming Policy and Law in Support of Person-Centered Quality and Choice, is coming up quick!

Early bird registration rates expire on April 1, 2014.

[Have you registered yet?](#)

When Sunday, June 8, 2014 arrives we hope you will be by our side. There is always great networking and speakers, and following the conference you can also participate in VOR's Washington Initiative, which includes Congressional visits, during the week of June 9, 2014. For more information, including registration opportunities, visit VOR's website.

What are you waiting for?

- [Here is an online registration form.](#)
- If you prefer to respond by mail, [here is a print form with conference details and registration form to mail.](#)
- [Here is a link for hotel reservations.](#)

Please [register today](#) and see you in June!
Gratefully

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Questions: thopp@vor.net

Share: Please share [information about our Conference](#) with your family and friends by email and on social media. Thank you!

LEGAL NEWS

3. New Jersey: VOR files Amicus Brief in support of Individuals and their Families

March 25, 2014

Plaintiffs/Appellants in *Sciarrillo v. Christie* have appealed the District Court's dismissal of their lawsuit, with VOR filing an *Amicus* brief this week in support of Plaintiffs/Appellants.

Appellants are 35 residents, represented by their families/legal guardians, who reside in two New Jersey Developmental Centers which are slated to close. Appellants argue that the State is violating the rights of residents, including their right, per ADA/Olmstead and other laws, to have individualized assessments as to needs and required services and an evaluation as to least restrictive environment appropriate to individual needs, and a right to choose such setting that best meets those needs.

VOR has filed an *Amicus* brief in support of Appellants, arguing that the *Olmstead* decision "requires a state agency to make individualized assessments of the needs of disabled individuals as to the least restrictive environment that can meet their needs, which may be a developmental center, before individuals are transferred to community-based care." VOR's brief was joined by six Amici: Woodbridge Developmental Center Parents Association; Save New Jersey Developmental Centers, Inc. (d/b/a Save Residents' Homes at Developmental Centers); Association for Hunterdon Developmental Center; Green Brook Regional Center Family and Friends Association; Vito Coletti, Family Advocacy Representative of Vineland Developmental Center; and North Jersey Developmental Center Parents' Council (d/b/a North Jersey Developmental Center Families & Friends).

[Read Plaintiffs/Appellants Brief in Appeal and](#)

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[related filings](#)

[Read VOR's Amicus Brief](#)

FEDERAL NEWS

4. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) releases guidance on new "Community" rule; certain inclusive settings described as "isolating" by CMS

Earlier this week, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) shared with State Medicaid Agencies, Operating Agencies, and other stakeholders a toolkit to assist states in complying with new requirements in the recently published home and community-based services regulations.

[Read more here](#)

Read "[Additional technical guidance on regulatory language regarding settings that isolate.](#)"

STATE NEWS

5. New Jersey Assembly approves bill mandating surveys after state institutions close

The Star-Ledger * March 20, 2014

The state Assembly overwhelmingly (75-0) passed a bill today that would require the state to assess the well-being and safety of disabled residents who are transferred from two state institutions the Christie administration plans to phase out by January 2015.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

6. Illinois/National: Dart Tells Congress 'We Have Criminalized Mental Illness In This Country'

CBS Chicago * March 26, 2014

Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart has taken his appeal for more help for mentally ill jail inmates to Capitol Hill.

The sheriff told members of Congress the Cook County Jail remains the nation's largest mental health facility, with at least 30 percent of its 9,000 inmates suffering from serious mental illness. "The unfortunate undeniable conclusion is that, because of the dramatic and sustained cuts in mental health funding, we have criminalized mental illness in this country; and county jails and state prison facilities are where the majority of the mental health care and treatment is administered," Dart said.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

7. New York: Preston says 'violent individuals' have been discharged from BDC; County executive sends letter to Gov. Cuomo

Press Connects (Binghamton, NY) * March 20, 2014

Broome County Executive Debbie Preston claimed Thursday that "violent individuals" are being discharged from the Broome Developmental Center's Local Intensive Treatment unit into the local community as the state prepares to close the facility by March 31, 2016.

Preston sent a strongly-worded letter to Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Thursday, urging him to reconsider the closing of the Town of Dickinson facility.

"I am urging the governor to reconsider his decision to close facilities like this one just to save money," Preston said.

In July 2013, the state Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) announced four state institutions, including the Broome Developmental Center, at 249 Glenwood Road, will close over the next few years.

The state plan has received harsh criticism from local officials since it was announced last summer.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

RESEARCH NEWS

8. CDC: 1 in 68 U.S. children has autism

CNN * March 27, 2014

One in 68 U.S. children has an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), a 30% increase from 1 in 88 two years ago, according to a new report released Thursday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This newest estimate is based on the CDC's evaluation of health and educational records of all 8-year-old children in 11 states: Alabama, Wisconsin, Colorado, Missouri, Georgia, Arkansas, Arizona, Maryland, North Carolina, Utah and New Jersey.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

Quotable

"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant." ~ Robert Louis Stevenson

=====

Calendar Reminders:

Tuesday, March 25, 2014

AHCA/NCAI's fifth annual "ID/DD Residential Services

Providers Hill Fly-In. Questions? Dana Halvorson, 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

*** 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.

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

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