



Speaking out for people with intellectual & developmental disabilities



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**Reminders:
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News and views for VOR Advocates

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VOR and YOU

1. Free Webinar of Interest: Downsizing and Closing of a State ICF/IID (sponsored by the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities)

AAIDD

Downsizing and Closing of a State ICF/IID

[Click here to register \(free\)](#)

September 30, 2014, 5pm Eastern

According to AAIDD, “This webinar will discuss the factors involved and the actions taken to successfully close a state-run ICF/IID. Topics include fiscal impact, provider impact, and the results for the individuals involved.”

VOR is not at all affiliated AAIDD or with this webinar and does not endorse AAIDD positions. **VOR strongly encourages families and other advocates to attend and contribute to the discussion.**

2. Recognizing our Annual Conference Dinner Sponsors

It was recently brought to our attention that several dinner sponsors were not recognized in the recent issue of *The Voice*, VOR's newsletter. While these generous sponsors were recognized on in our Conference Program, on signage at the Conference and on

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our [website](#), the process of editing and reformatting for the print newsletter resulted in their names being inadvertently and most regrettably deleted.

To make this right, at this time, we gratefully acknowledge the following donors for their generosity as Dinner Sponsors.

- **Robert and Evelyn Greene (Arizona)**
- **Kimball S. Bullard III, CIMA, UBS Financial Services (Massachusetts)**
- **David Swain (North Carolina)**
- **Mt. St. Joseph Association (Illinois)**

A correction with our apology will also be printed in our next newsletter.

[Thank you again to all Conference Sponsors!](#) You make our annual event possible.

FEDERAL NEWS

3. Budget & Appropriations – House Expected to Take up Short Term Spending Bill

The Arc Capitol Insider * September 15, 2014

According to press reports, the House of Representatives will likely vote this week on a short term spending bill for FY 2015 which starts on October 1. This would leave the Senate little to no opportunity to make changes and send it back before the House leaves for election recess. Most programs are expected to receive level funding in this continuing resolution (CR) that would run through mid-December. This would be the 4th consecutive year of erosion in non-defense discretionary (NDD) spending (which included disability-related programs such as education, housing, and employment) when factoring in the cost of inflation. See recent disability-related discretionary funding levels here.

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4. Autism Services Focus Of New Push

***Disability Scoop* * September 15, 2014**

Federal officials say they're embarking on a new effort to identify best practices to meet the needs of individuals with autism from childhood to adulthood.

The National Institute of Mental Health is doling out \$7.9 million in first-year funding for 12 research projects that will assess various models of service delivery for individuals with the developmental disorder at three key stages of life.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

5. Vote On UN Disability Treaty Blocked

***Disability Scoop* * September 18, 2014**

An effort in the U.S. Senate to bring a vote on an international disability rights treaty has been squashed.

Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, took to the Senate floor Wednesday calling for a unanimous consent vote on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The senator requested two hours of debate on the treaty with no amendments followed by an up-or-down vote much like the Senate did two years ago.

Within minutes, however, the plan was shot down with an objection from Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, who said that two hours of debate was insufficient and indicated that amendments should be allowed.

"There are a number of our colleagues, both on and off the committee, who have concerns with this treaty," Lee said.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

STATE NEWS

6. New Jersey: Advocates unsatisfied with developmental center hearing

The Sentinel * September 16, 2014

Advocates for residents of the soon-to-close Woodbridge Developmental Center (WDC) left a recent state-sponsored public hearing with unanswered questions about the future of their loved ones.

The state Department of Human Services (DHS) held the hearing Sept. 2 in New Brunswick to provide a forum for parties concerned about the planned Jan. 1 closure of the facility, which houses individuals with intensive needs related to profound developmental disabilities.

“There were no answers to any questions,” said Joanne St. Amand, president of the Woodbridge Developmental Center parents’ association [and VOR Board Member]. “In my opinion, if DHS really wanted to consider the concerns of families, this hearing would have been held two years earlier, before the closure process began, and DHS would have mailed letters inviting families and guardians to attend. The timing and the lack of notice to the families is a clear example of how DHS has excluded families from the entire closure process.”

[Read more, comment and share](#)

7. New Jersey: Workers picket Vineland Developmental Center over plan to close group homes

Press of Atlantic City * September 17, 2014

VINELAND — About 40 state workers

picketed at the Vineland Developmental Center here on Wednesday in opposition to a New Jersey plan to privatize some group homes in South Jersey.

Most of the group homes — which serve 137 adult women — are in Atlantic and Cumberland counties. The group homes are also the only ones left in New Jersey that are staffed by state workers.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

8. Georgia: The Family Council of the East Central Georgia Regional Center (“Gracewood”) Responds to Federal Inspection Report

The Family Council * September 18, 2014

AUGUSTA - The Family Council represents the residents of Gracewood facility, a Medicaid-licensed Intermediate Care Facility for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICFs/IID).

The Family Council is troubled by recent [findings](#) by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), which in an inspection report is critical of the quality of care their family members receive at Gracewood.

Families have long pointed to robust federal oversight of ICF/IID homes as critical and a factor distinguishing Georgia’s ICFs/IID, including Gracewood, from community alternatives. ICFs/IID are subject to annual surveys involving eight conditions of participation with hundreds of standards to remain licensed.

“We are absolutely troubled by these findings.” said Theresa Senior, Vice President

of the Family Council. "But we take great comfort in the oversight process that ensures our family members' homes remain safe. The same is not true in the community where oversight is lacking and even, in some cases, non-existent. It took a media attention before the state and the Department of Justice got serious about the alarming tragedies in community settings involving those transferring from ICFs/IID."

Families blame the implementation of the settlement for CMS' findings.

[Read complete release](#)

MENTAL ILLNESS IN THE NEWS

9. Indiana: Sheriffs: mentally ill people swamping jails

***The State* * September 15, 2014**

INDIANAPOLIS — County jails have become the "insane asylum" for Indiana as state hospital care for the mentally ill has declined, a sheriff told a legislative committee Monday.

Since the 1980s, many state mental hospitals have been closed or downsized as part of a shift toward community-based care. But the sheer number of mentally ill people who need hospital treatment but can't afford to pay for private care or who can't, or won't, stay on the medication that helps them cope with daily life are swamping the system, Sheriffs Kenneth Murphy and Steve Rogers said. And jails have been taking up the slack.

"Quite frankly, we have become the insane asylum for the United States, not just the state of Indiana," said Murphy, sheriff of rural Franklin County in southeastern Indiana. which is nearer

to Cincinnati than it is to Indianapolis.

Murphy and Rogers, who is sheriff of Howard County in central Indiana, told the Interim Study Committee on Corrections and Criminal Code that they struggle to cope with mentally ill inmates who they don't believe really belong behind bars. Both sheriffs estimated that as many as one-fourth of jail inmates in Indiana may have serious mental illness.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

10. Michigan: Waiting for disaster - How Michigan is failing the mentally ill

WXYZ 7 (ABC, Detroit) * September 15, 2014

After 24 years on the bench in Wayne County, Judge Milton Mack is tired. Tired of seeing care for the mentally ill get worse, of watching state spending continue to fall and seeing the same desperate families back in his courtroom until their crisis turns to tragedy.

"I see something that's right in front of me, and it just strikes me as being extremely unjust and unfair," says Mack. "And I'm a part of it. And I don't want to be a part of it."

But if Judge Mack is fighting a battle to fix a broken system, he is surely losing. Today, Michigan spends less to treat the mentally ill than it did last year or the year before. Most state hospital beds have been replaced with jail cells. Each day in his courtroom, the same sorry scene plays out, often with the very same characters.

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

11. Mississippi: Left to Fend - The State's Mental Health Failure

Jackson Free Press (Mississippi) * August 27, 2014

In 2013, Mississippi State Hospital decided, with help from the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, to close their community-based services and prioritize their acute inpatient care at Whitfield. Lynn McNair, longtime mental-health advocate and former director of Mental Health Association of the Capital Area, doesn't quite buy this explanation.

"The Community Services Division of Mississippi State Hospital has been in existence for 30 years. All of a sudden, they decided that their primary focus all along had been acute care for people in the hospital. But these services had been in place for 30 years, so it's a little hard to swallow. This is about money," McNair said.

The decision came after a decrease in funds in recent years, including legislative budget slashes in appropriation bills over a six year period. DMH cited the budget cuts as a motivator behind prioritizing acute inpatient care at MSH over community-based care, like the care provided at the Capers Avenue location. MSH and DMH claim the closure allows them to operate within their current financial means and focus funds on inpatient care. Ultimately, hospital officials claim community services were never in line with the mission of the facility.

"My biggest concern is: Where are the 120 people that were in the program?" McNair said.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

12. Urgent Care Centers Opening for People with Mental Illness

***The Washington Post* * August 28, 2014**

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — Hoping to keep more people with mental illness out of jails and emergency rooms, county health officials opened a mental health urgent care center Wednesday in South Los Angeles.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

QUOTABLE

"Courage is, You Know, but you do it anyway. You go in there and fight." ~ Jim Harbaugh

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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