

For Immediate Release

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For More Information

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**National Disability Advocate to Visit Wyoming Life Resource Center
and Speak to Center Families**

Julie Huso, Executive Director of VOR, a national non-profit, non-provider, advocacy organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), will travel to Lander next week to tour the Wyoming Life Resource Center (WLRC) and meeting residents' families. She will meet with WLRC families on Monday, November 4, from 6:30 – 8:30 pm, following the center tour, at the Lander Public Library, Carnegie Room.



Julie Huso

"I'm excited to tour WLRC and meet the residents served so well there," said Huso. "With the help of our State Coordinator, Connie Howard, whose son receives WLRC services, VOR has been a present help in need for families, offering advocacy resources to show elected officials that WLRC is a quality, cost-effective home to residents."

Huso will present to families "Grassroots Advocacy In Action," a VOR presentation designed to inform and empower families to be strong and effective advocates for their loved ones with profound developmental disabilities.

"For most members of the Friends of WLRC group, this will simply reinforce their good efforts and energy, while also making the connection between their state-level efforts and VOR's national cause" remarked Huso. "These families have done a remarkable job bringing their stories to the Wyoming legislature and to the public."



Connie Howard

Connie Howard, VOR's Wyoming State Coordinator, agrees.

"There is a great group of families who have been very effective in building relationships with supportive legislators and educating other legislators who did not understand the need for WLRC," said Howard.

A recent report by the federally-funded Wyoming Protection & Advocacy (P&A) makes VOR visit timely.

“I’m aware that P&A issued a report critical of WLRC,” said Huso. “I also know that the State had been reviewing how WLRC responds to incidents even before the P&A report and is, appropriately, also looking into P&A’s allegations. There is no setting – whether facility or community-based – that is 100% safe, 100% of the time. There is always room for improvement in the care of fragile people.”

Still, VOR is suspect of P&A conclusions.

“For nearly two decades, federally-funded P&A lawsuits across the country have pursued downsizing and closure of duly licensed facilities without raising any concern about conditions of care,” said Tamie Hopp, VOR’s Director of Government Relations & Advocacy. “P&As generally take the view that centers like WLRC should closed without regard to individual choice, needs, and quality of care.”

Instead, VOR advocates deference to individuals and their families as primary decision-makers. Families, more than anyone, demand that their loved ones are receiving good care.

“Individuals and their families are only motivated by receiving good, high quality, compassionate care,” added Hopp. “I find their view of the situation at WLRC far more credible than any other.”

VOR is the only national organization challenging a nationwide trend to close facilities serving people with I/DD, while also supporting community expansion.

“My son needs the services provided by WLRC, just as those residents with brain injuries require the life-sustaining services provided only at WLRC,” said Howard. “I recognize, however, that there are many people who are better served in community-based programs. I don’t dare speak for them. There is a need for WLRC for some people and expanded community options for others. We should not settle for one size fits all approach to caring for people with disabilities.”

About VOR:

VOR is a national organization that advocates for high quality care and human rights for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Offering community, legal, health care and educational resources for families of individuals with special needs, VOR is committed to providing help for people with disabilities. Standing up for long term care facilities and community disability programs, VOR is dedicated to maintaining family choice for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For more information about VOR, please visit us at www.vor.net.

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