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February 27, 2015



Speaking out for people with
intellectual & developmental
disabilities



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**Reminders:
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VOR Weekly News Update

News and views for VOR Advocates

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VOR and YOU

**2015
Conference:
Advocating for
Choice by
Expanding
Opportunities**

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About VOR

1. See you in Washington, D.C. in June!

[Thanks to all who have already registered for VOR's Annual Conference and Initiative. If you still need to register, please do so today!](#)

2. VOR Editorial: Closing Southbury Training School to Serve More People Doesn't Add Up

Hartford Courant * February 23, 2015 * Tamie Hopp (VOR) and Martha Dwyer (President, Home & School Association of Southbury Training School)

There is a crisis in the care of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Connecticut. At least 2,000 individuals who are living with their families are on the waiting list for placement in a residence, many for more than 20 years and many in desperate situations.

Many people believe that closing Southbury Training School and the state regional centers and moving residents to four-person (or smaller) group homes will free up funds to enable individuals on the waiting list to be placed in residences. This is incorrect and will create more problems than it will solve. Connecticut's problems are considerable and tragic, and they should be addressed by a comprehensive plan.

The numbers don't add up. There are approximately 313 individuals at Southbury and 191 at regional centers. At least 125 new group homes would have to be renovated and staffed to provide highly specialized services for these individuals. Moving a resident of Southbury to the community generally takes one to two years, and this during periods when only a few residents are moved at a time. To move 500 people would take years and a huge amount of money. Residents at Southbury and regional centers have been given priority over people on the waiting list for years and that would have to continue indefinitely to close Southbury and the regional centers. That would help no one on the waiting list for many years.

[Read complete editorial, PLEASE COMMENT and share](#)

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About VOR

Editor's Note: Not surprisingly, the Chair of the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities wrote a letter to the editor criticizing our editorial in support of Southbury Training School. Your comments in response to [her disparaging letter](#) are also welcome and needed.

3. VOR and New Jersey Affiliates Oppose Proposed State Transition Plan

VOR * February 23, 2015

This week, VOR with its affiliates submitted written testimony in opposition to the proposed New Jersey Statewide Transition Plan (STP) as part of the public comment process for the Final Rule recently released by Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

Joining VOR and assisting in the development of the testimony were the Association for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities, the Association for Hunterdon Developmental Center, Save Residents' Homes at Developmental Centers and Green Brook Family Association. VOR Board Member Joanne St. Amand, who heads up two of the supporting organizations, was especially helpful.

Our testimony opposed the State Transition Plan (STP), calling it "deeply flawed." "The STP does not take into consideration the wide range and severity of intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) exhibited among the individuals needing HCB [Home and Community Based] services and supports," we wrote.

The following summarize our concerns.

- New Jersey Should Not Be Proposing Unnecessary Changes to Law and Policy Before Hearing from the Public
 - Lack of Adequate Public Notice
- The STP Rejects Living Arrangements Allowed by the Rule: The STP Must Consider and Allow Innovative Partnerships as Allowed by the Federal CMS Rule
- The STP Contains Harmful Arbitrary Quotas Which Completely Negate Individual Choice and Need.

Contrary to the Final Rule

- Reliance Solely on Provider Self-Assessments Prevent Necessary Public Input

[Our complete testimony is available here.](#)

4. Follow up to New York Times' "The Modern Asylum"

Thanks to all who wrote letters to the editor, as encouraged last week, in response to "[The Modern Asylum](#)," which pointed out the failings of deinstitutionalization of both individuals with mental illness and intellectual disabilities.

A few got printed, which you can see here: "[Can there be good mental asylums?](#)"

STATE NEWS

5. Ohio Editorial: Stand up and speak for those with no voice

*The Bellevue Gazette (Flat Rock, OH) * February 24, 2015 **
Sally Boyd, Contributing Columnist

Excerpts

There is a "crisis" in Flat Rock.

For those who are not familiar with "Flat Rock," it is a Christian facility which has a long, long history of serving and protecting children in need. The needs have changed, beginning with its days as an orphanage, then transitioning to its present mission as a safe, caring, and service-oriented residential facility for youth who are seriously developmentally disabled.

The 34 youths who now reside there have disabilities too severe to be able to function in their family homes. Their behaviors and physical needs are such that it makes life very disruptive – and sometimes dangerous – for them AND the other members of their family, virtually all of whom are simply unable to care for them appropriately at home.

The youths, who range in age from six to 21, and their families are now at the epicenter of a state-wide movement to close facilities such as Flat Rock. This is beyond ridiculous. This is where YOU can help.

An organization called Disability Rights of Ohio (DRO)[Protection & Advocacy] is threatening to sue Ohio if the state “does not take action to ‘significantly reduce’ the number of persons residing” in facilities such as Flat Rock. DRO believes residents of agencies like Flat Rock should be transitioned to “small, integrated, community-based” ‘placements.’

Meaning, close the doors of Flat Rock and other “intermediate care facilities (ICF).”

Frankly, that is ridiculous. Not everyone with developmental disabilities has the ABILITY to make an informed “choice” as to their living arrangements. Some, with years of education and support, can – eventually – transition to a group home setting. Many, however, cannot.

[Read more, comment and share](#)

QUOTABLE

"If everyone is thinking alike, then no one is thinking,"
~ Benjamin Franklin

Calendar Reminders:

Tuesday, March 24, 2015:

[American Health Care Association ID/DD
Washington Fly-In](#)

Congressional speakers are being invited, a legislative update will be provided, and Hill visits will follow in the afternoon. Breakfast and a boxed lunch will be provided to you. [Registration is free but required.](#) VOR members are encouraged to attend.

Sunday, June 7, 2015:

[VOR Annual Conference: **ADVOCATING FOR
CHOICE BY EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES.** Registration
Open.](#)

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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