

The Arc of Pennsylvania Position Statement

Action Plan: CLOSE STATE CENTERS

Background

The General Assembly embraced the shift from state institutions to community-based services when it passed the MH/MR Act in 1966. Over 40 years later, the community-based service system has become the primary system of support for citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities. People with intellectual disabilities want to live in their own homes and communities, and research has demonstrated that individuals with intellectual disabilities thrive when supported in the community compared to state institutions (Pennhurst Longitudinal Study). In 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed a person's right to receive community-integrated services rather than be segregated in an institutional setting. Yet, today, about 1,263 Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities are still segregated in the five state-run institutions: Hamburg, Polk, Selinsgrove, Ebensburg, and White Haven. According to the Disability Rights Network (DRN), all 1263 of these men and women are "technically" on the Waiting List and all do have a Priority of Urgency of Need for Services (PUNS) form completed and on file. *(See attached document indicating the number of people living in each center by their county of origin and the map of Pennsylvania that denotes the location of all 5 state centers.)*

Many have little or no family contact, and most are older, and therefore all need the voice of a strong advocacy effort to help them find a great new life in the community. The Arc of Pennsylvania will seek to proactively work with families to offer support and information about community supports and services.

The Arc of Pennsylvania Public Policy Position

The Arc of Pennsylvania supports a review of individualized supports plans (ISP) of every citizen who remains in a state center within 6 months. Each ISP should include a transition plan to enable the individual to return to the community of their choice with appropriate supports and services. The Arc of Pennsylvania urges the Governor and General Assembly to then instruct DPW to fund and implement these updated ISPs and permanently close one state center within two years and to develop a plan within one year to close the remaining state centers within a specific time period.

The Arc of Pennsylvania Action Plan:

1. Develop a new sub-committee of the SAGA Committee to be called the Closure of State Centers Sub-Committee. The sub-committee would continue until all state centers are closed or until such a time as the SAGA Committee would recommend the elimination of the sub-committee. The sub-committee would have co-chairs, at least one representative from the Disability Rights Network, at least one member from a local chapter of The Arc geographically close to each of the 5 state centers and other committed volunteers.
2. The primary purpose of the sub-committee would be to work to fulfill The Arc of Pennsylvania public policy priority on state centers and to advocate for the

closure off all state centers and the move to appropriate community settings for all residents of state centers.

3. The primary tasks of the sub-committee would be to do the following:
 - a. Monitor the DPW/Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) plans and efforts to close state centers; and meet with DPW/ODP representatives, staff from the Governor's office and legislators as necessary.
 - b. Work with local chapters of The Arc, the Disability Rights Network, similar organizations, and other committed volunteers to monitor the quality of life conditions at each state center, to visit with individuals at least once a year and to share the results of these monitoring visits with the Deputy Secretary of ODP, the Secretary of DPW and staff from the Governor's office.
 - c. Work with local Arc chapters, the Disability Rights Network, similar organizations, and other committed volunteers to review the ISPs, including community transition plans, and PUNS for all citizens living in the state centers to ensure that the plans ensure their health and safety and a self-determined life.
 - d. To ensure that transition planning will result in all state center residents moving to the community of their choice and receiving necessary supports to ensure their health and safety.

The Role of The Arc of Pennsylvania

Historically, The Arc of Pennsylvania was one of the leading organizations that forced the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to close many of its state centers, dating back to the original Pennhurst litigation in the early 1970s. It is again time to re-dedicate the organization and its members to this mission. We are joining with advocates from across the state, families and self-advocates to provide the leadership to monitor the services provided to citizens living in the state centers and to work to close them.

How You Can Help:

If you are interested in volunteering in this effort, please call Maureen Jordan at The Arc of Pennsylvania at (717-234-2621) or email at mjordan@thearcpcpa.org.

Approved

Board of Directors 4/20/09