

## ***Southbury Training School Recommendations***

**Date:** November 9, 2015

**To:** Commissioner Murray, DDS

**From:** David Liedlich, DDS Case Manager

**Re:** STS Recommendations

[Please state your relationship to DDS and interest in this matter. To the greatest extent possible, please make your viewpoint and reasoning clear in an introduction to your recommendations.]

I am a DDS Case Manager who works at the Southbury Training School. I have been asked to pass along thoughts and suggestions from several DDS, STS staff persons who are not comfortable with computers. I have also included in Recommendation 4 the views of many families and guardians that I work with. I am a resident of the town of Southbury.

Employees as well as DDS consumers and their families consider the Southbury Training School campus to be very beautiful. Many people who live in the town of Southbury as well as other towns benefit from the presence of the Southbury Training School for many reasons. The campus and associated state property are aesthetically pleasing, and also provide valuable wildlife habitat, including documented species listed in Connecticut's Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern database. There is an annual Antique and Classic Car Show put on by The Roaring 20's Antique Car Club. This event is a huge draw every year for both DDS consumers and the public. Besides visitors and people with show cars, many vendors attend this event every year. Several weeks later, the STS campus hosts another major public event – The Southbury Celebration, where vendors sell food; there are live music performances, and a fireworks display enjoyed by area residents and DDS consumers. This event is well-attended and has become a tradition in town. In addition, local businesses such as stores and restaurants recognize the value of having the Southbury Training School in town. Employees as well as DDS consumers and their families patronize the stores, restaurants, and other businesses. In addition, there are two Thrift Shops operated on Southbury Training School property. These thrift shops provide volunteer opportunities for people living in the surrounding community, many of whom are retired. The thrift shops provide a place for people to make charitable donations of clothing and goods. Some of the donations are used for the benefit of DDS consumers. Other donations are placed for sale in the thrift shops, where many citizens shop for a wide range of items. The thrift shop also provides a venue for the sale of farm-fresh eggs produced at the Southbury Training School Poultry Farm (and the STS poultry farm provides meaningful employment to DDS consumers). The STS Poultry Farm also grows Christmas trees for tag-and-cut sales. Members of the local community love the farm fresh eggs, pumpkins, and Christmas trees produced by the work off DDS consumers. The Southbury Training School also has a restaurant, The Gatehouse Café, and a Greenhouse which are both open to the public, and well-patronized by people from the surrounding communities.

[For each recommendation provided below, please detail a justification or explanation.]

**Recommendation 1:** The former Hospital/Health Care Unit on the STS campus can be utilized by another agency in need of such a facility.

**Justification:** Two possibilities that come to mind are the Veteran's Administration or the CT state prison system (for use by elderly prisoners in need of nursing home type care).

The need for another facility for care of Veterans in Connecticut is great, and a facility in the former Hospital/Health Care Unit on the STS campus would be a wonderful use for that complex. Or, if used by the state prison system, elderly low-risk prisoners in need of nursing home-type care could have services provided in a facility set up for them, and away from the general prison population. Many would agree that the geriatric prisoners would probably pose little threat to the public safety.

**Recommendation 2:** Unfortunately there are many DDS consumers who reside in nursing homes. They can be moved from the nursing homes to cottages at the STS campus.

**Justification:** Nursing homes are both expensive and often not the best places for DDS consumers. Employees of nursing homes are typically not well-trained in the needs of the intellectually disabled. In addition, the care in some nursing homes is not always the best. For example, consumers who are unable to walk and unable to reposition themselves often develop bed sores while residing in nursing homes or even during stays in community hospitals. Residential and medical staff at the Southbury Training School have specialized experience in caring for this type of a population. Repositioning schedules and various adaptive seating is utilized to virtually eliminate bed sores in people who reside at STS. As noted, many of our consumers develop bed sores even when in a community hospital, and after they return home to STS, the bed sores heal. We should get the DDS consumers out of nursing homes, and provide them with good care at STS.

**Recommendation 3:** Office space at the Southbury Training School can be made available as drop in work stations for state employees who live in the region, but work in state offices farther away.

**Justification:** This currently already happens with some DDS employees who know about existing STS work stations. DDS employees who work in other offices come in on snowy days and work from a computer at STS rather than drive to Hartford, for example, during inclement weather. Others do the same throughout the year when their travels bring them close to the STS campus. It saves time and fuel to complete the work day at the STS campus, rather than drive back to their main office. Making additional work stations available at the STS campus for other state employees can save time and fuel, reduce highway congestion, and help to keep our state workforce safe by reducing their commute during bad weather.

**Recommendation 4:** Many families of people who reside at the Southbury Training School would like to see the facility opened to DDS consumers who have no residential services.

**Justification:** Families of our consumers have praise for the good care and loving home atmosphere provided at STS. They would like to see the skilled work force at STS made available to other DDS consumers who are on the waiting list for residential services. Why not utilize an excellent facility which already exists?

**Recommendation 5:** The specialized employees at STS can be utilized for the care of geriatric DDS consumers from other facilities.

**Justification:** The workforce at STS is highly skilled in the care of elderly people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It seems crazy to let this talent evaporate.

There is a need in Connecticut for geriatric care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We should utilize that talent and expertise available at STS and provide support for other geriatric DDS consumers in need of these specialized skills and services.

**Recommendation 6:** DDS needs to provide services for people within the Autism Spectrum.

**Justification:** The Southbury Training School seems to be a logical place to establish an Autism Unit. There are existing buildings which can be utilized. The STS campus is located close to Interstate 84, and can be conveniently accessed from most areas of Connecticut. Besides having the location and the infrastructure, there is the human capital and resource of the diverse workforce of employees with many years' experience. Many of the individuals residing at STS have autism in addition to other diagnoses. It would be wonderful to utilize the facility and personnel that we already have. Create an Autism Unit at STS!

**Recommendation 7:** The Southbury Training School is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and contains architecturally significant buildings. Keeping the historical buildings of the STS campus in good shape is best done by keeping them occupied. Buildings that are vacant and no longer heated become degraded and masonry work crumbles, for example. It makes sense to keep the buildings occupied to retain their soundness and value.

**Justification:** Buildings no longer needed for DDS state employees, or DDS and STS consumers can be used by or rented to appropriate and compatible state or federal agencies or private businesses. Other state agencies might be in need of office space along the I-84 corridor, or in western Connecticut. Perhaps private agencies that operate community homes might be interested. Private accounting firms or any other such office with a low traffic volume would probably be an acceptable use, for example. Make vacant buildings at Southbury Training School available to other state agencies or for rent to private companies with acceptable uses, and keep the buildings from deteriorating.