

Date: 10-05-15

To: Commissioner Murray, DDS

From: James Campbell
DDS Case Manager, Parent/Guardian of adult child receiving DDS services

Re: STS Recommendations

Recommendation:

Due to the low number of individuals that remain in residential placement at STS, there needs to be a clear plan to close STS, including a definitive closing date. The recommendation is that the closing date be the end of the fiscal year 2018-2019 (June 30, 2019). DDS can offer each individual (and their families/guardian) a beautiful community placement with extensive supports for significantly less than the cost of the placement at STS. The rationale for keeping individuals residing at STS is that the families were told that there would always be a place for them at STS. It was an unfortunate mistake to make this statement to grieving families, but statements that were made many decades ago in a different financial climate should not be something that is utilized in the 21st century to keep individuals in an outdated system and while concurrently withholding funding from thousands of families who also require DDS supports but cannot receive them due to the excessive funds currently utilized to keep STS open. These families/guardians for individuals residing at STS need to be informed that 1) STS was the appropriate placement at the time that it was opened, 2) despite being told long ago that STS would always be available, that was not a fair statement to make, and it will not be available as of a specific date, 3) an alternative community placement that meets the needs of their family member or friend will be made available, 4) this is being done as the State of Connecticut can no longer afford the incredibly excessive costs to keep STS open, as by doing so, thousands of individuals with developmental disabilities with significant support needs are being turned away, and DDS can no longer do this as it is inappropriate, unfair, unjust, and against their rights as Connecticut citizens.

The only difference between the individuals/families receiving DDS services at STS and the individuals/families that require DDS supports but are not receiving them due to the excessive funding for STS is that the STS families have a strong political advocacy system in place, while the families who require DDS supports are isolated and exhausted from trying to provide supports on their own, and most do not have the time/resources/energy/ability to advocate/network to develop the same advocacy systems that the STS families have developed.

Justification:

DDS has a significant annual budget. There are countless numbers of families who are told year after year that "there is no money available" for their family member with a developmental disability. This is not true. It is also unfair; these families are Connecticut taxpayers the same as the STS families. There is money in the DDS budget; it is just not utilized appropriately or fairly. Exorbitant levels of funds are expended to maintain a small amount of individuals at STS (and regional centers) that could be more appropriately and fairly utilized for individuals and families who are truly struggling on a daily basis to provide services for their family members in their homes but require either in-home supports or residential placement. While at the same time, community placements with as good or better supports could be developed for the individuals currently residing at STS but for less than half the cost.

James Campbell
DDS Case Manager