

December 21, 2015

Commissioner Morna A. Murray, J.D.
Department of Developmental Services
460 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Southbury Training School Recommendations

Dear Commissioner Murray:

I write today, on behalf of our more than sixty member organizations that deliver intellectual/developmental disability services, to make recommendations regarding the future of Southbury Training School (STS). For several decades, community providers have been helping people with disabilities live healthy, fulfilling lives in the community. We know that, with appropriate and sufficient community supports, people with developmental and intellectual disabilities can flourish. Community providers have proven that they are uniquely able to provide those supports in ways that allow individuals to thrive more than anyone thought possible.

For decades, community providers have offered solutions that keep people safe and supported and allow them to live and work as independently as their abilities and desires dictate. A class of people formerly segregated in institutions has been fully integrated into communities with the help of community providers.

CCPA respectfully offers the following recommendations:

1. Close Southbury Training School by March 17, 2019 and move its residents into community settings.

Community providers, over several decades, have helped people successfully transition out of institutions, including Southbury Training School, into community settings. Time and again, individuals formerly thought to be unable to function outside of an institutional setting have blossomed into happy, productive members of society. With proper supports, even someone with the most intensive needs can live a fulfilling life in the community.

CCPA's recommended closure date is intentional, as it is the date on which the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) Home and Community Based Settings (HCBS) Rule is scheduled to be implemented. As you know, the HCBS Rule mandates full community integration for people with disabilities. This level of integration is also required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States in *Olmstead v. L.C.*

Simply put, living life fully integrated in the community is not only better for individuals, it is required by federal law.

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2. Pay rates that cover the cost of services.

Community providers can only help people living at STS transition into the community if the state pays them enough to hire and train quality staff, buy or lease, renovate and maintain proper homes, and continue to implement innovative services to assist people in the community now and in the future

Current rates for nearly every service type leave providers facing financial losses for each hour they are supporting people. With almost no exceptions, rates have not increased in a decade and are constant targets for budget cuts and rescissions. As the economy has improved following the recession, it has become more difficult to find qualified and dedicated staff to fill positions at compensation levels supported by current low rates. Providers are faced with insufficient revenue to meet expenses due to inadequate payment from the state.

Stability and economic vitality are critical to providers' ability to successfully transition individuals, especially those with the advanced needs and age of many STS residents, into the community. If DDS wants to foster competition and choice in the options offered to individuals and families, it must increase the rates that providers are paid for services. In the long-term, the savings that the state will achieve by moving individuals into community settings will cover the cost of such rate increases.

Community providers stand ready to partner with DDS, as we have for many years, to make transitions as smooth as possible for STS residents and their families. Because community providers already provide supports to thousands of individuals that are integrated in many communities across the state, they are nimble, adaptable, and ready and willing to work with the Department to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey L. Walter
Interim CEO