

Date: Dec. 29, 2015

To: Commissioner Morna Murray, DDS

From: Lisa Hennessey

RE: STS Recommendations

I am guardian and care provider for my son, Evan, age 21, diagnosed with Down Syndrome at birth. We moved to Connecticut when Evan was 5. We thought services and opportunities were comparable to that of our previous home state. Within a few years, the first wave of cuts cost us our DDS case manager and I became Evan's sole advocate.

I recommend closing Southbury Training School and the 5 publicly operated regional centers. Having read the Parent Advocates Report (Rightsizing Southbury Training School) highlighting millions of dollars in waste was enough to cement my belief.

This should be followed by an overhaul of DDS. It is a shambles. With a focus on reducing inefficiency, funds would be available to provide services to our I/DD citizens, create cooperative/group homes, job training, etc.

You are proposing to isolate people who fought to make it through high school, want to get a job, gain some independence and contribute to their communities. Basically, these are the dreams of all young people. You yanked the financial rug out from under their families. We've had to give up our "real" jobs to educate ourselves on moving through the DDS, educational, and medical systems. We couldn't even save for our retirement never mind sustain a decent life for them after our passing. At this rate they will be among the homeless, a not so comforting thought for this 58 year old woman.

It's my understanding the "Task Force" you speak of hasn't met, nor are there any postings on the DDS web site that I can find. Frankly, I'm tired of writing to my "representatives" because they don't do what they say they will and choose to point fingers. I/DD people are simply your easy targets.