

Waiting List Fact Sheet You Need to Know

The Issue

In Colorado, over 2,800 individuals with developmental disabilities are currently waiting for residential services and other support. Federal laws mandate a wait time of less than 90 days, but these individuals have been on the wait list for such services for many years, some up to as many as 10 years.

According to the Quarterly Management Report July 31, 2001 by the Colorado Department of Human Services - 2,809 persons eligible for comprehensive services are on the waiting list.

In August, 2000 a lawsuit brought by three persons with developmental disabilities, on behalf of themselves and others with developmental disabilities, was filed in U.S. District Court alleging that the State of Colorado's practices regarding persons with mental retardation and developmental disabilities violate a number of federal laws. The suit charged that the state had violated federal Medicaid requirements for timely processing of applications, prompt provision of services, freedom of choice, constitutional due process and other laws, and sought to insure that such persons who are eligible for intermediate care facility services receive them, or their equivalent, within a reasonable amount of time as specified by federal law. Since the filing of the lawsuit, there has been no action in the Court and the defendants have actually caused a substantial reduction in the number of new residential resources for its fiscal year beginning in July, 2001. This will result in the growth of an already extensive waiting list for residential services and treatment.

In addition, several community centered boards, which serve as the point of entry into the state's developmental disabilities system for adult services, family supports and some early intervention services, have already moved to or are considering going to a 4-day work week, claiming inadequate funding. This is exacerbating the pressure--financial, emotional and physical--on already desperate parents and other family caregivers to the detriment of persons with developmental disabilities.

In a renewed motion for injunctive relief filed in June, 2001 in U.S. District Court on behalf of the three same adults with developmental disabilities, it was alleged that individuals with developmental disabilities in Colorado are suffering "serious, continuing and irreparable harm" while they wait for residential and other critical services including:

- being victimized by criminal activity upon them, such as assault and sexual assault;
- inadequate, inappropriate and unnecessarily restrictive and expensive placement in jails, prisons, nursing homes, rehabilitation facilities, and psychiatric and other hospitals;
- the lack of opportunity for treatment, habilitation and training and acquiring new skills;
- regression and loss of skills previously learned;

- ◆ delay or loss of readiness to live in more independent kinds of settings;
- increased psychological and behavioral problems (i.e. depression, lethality or suicide risk, aggression against others, self-injurious behavior, property destruction, threat of arson, etc.);
- the risk of double trauma--the loss of home and loss of parent at the same time - for individuals with elderly parents who are still required to care for them at home;
- the risk of inadequate or inappropriate placements because they are only made in emergencies without the kind of planning and adjustments steps necessary for a proper transition into residential care;
- safety and health risks (i.e. injury, fire, wandering off, admitting strangers, making and accepting inappropriate phone calls, seizures, falls, exploitation, etc.) associated with persons with developmental disabilities being left at home without sufficient supervision or treatment (whose parents must work or are otherwise unavailable to provide full time care);
- the inability of Colorado residents living out of state to “come home” to their families due to the lack of residential services in the state;
- risk of homelessness; inadequate medical care and poor nutrition;
- damage to family relationships due to injury and exhaustion (physical, emotional and financial) of parental and other family caregivers, and,
- subjection to swearing and fighting, insults, taunting, deprivation of property, physical abuse, and unsafe physical restraint inadequate and under-funded placements.

Relevant Facts

- There are currently over 2,800 known Coloradan adults with development disabilities waiting for residential and day program services (aka. Comprehensive Services).
- A significant number of these individuals are over the age of 40 living with parents who themselves are over 60.
- 711 of all the people on the waiting list statewide are classified as needing immediate residential/comprehensive services.
- The waiting list is not static. New individuals are being added to the list continuously.
- ◆ Colorado has a significant number of young adults who have graduated from high schools who are now at home with no services. Not only does this cause strain on the two-parent income home, the individual is losing valuable skills learned through special education programs. The strain on a single parent home is even more significant. Some parents are forced into quitting their jobs because they must stay home to supervise and care for their adult son or daughter or to leave their loved one unattended while at work.

Position

The Arc of Colorado, a non-profit grass roots association that advocates with and on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, believes that there are many other individuals beyond the estimated 3,000 that require residential/comprehensive services that aren't currently on a waiting list because they have either given up or do not know they have a right to these services.

In the 1980's and early 1990's, Colorado moved away from institutionalizing persons with developmental disabilities or mental retardation. The state placed a moratorium on the addition of new intermediate care facility/mental retardation services and moved to close down almost all existing facilities without ensuring replacement services to the many who need them. While the state has cited budgetary constraints for its actions, the consequences have been devastating. This has severely limited both intermediate care/mental retardation services and alternative, less expensive home and community based residential services so that currently only persons with emergency needs have any real chance of getting into services, and there aren't enough services even for the emergency situations. In addition, this has created a great hardship for individuals with developmental disabilities after they graduate from high school. Often there is no place for them to live or any assistance given to them in finding employment. Many parents are forced to quit their jobs in order to stay home and provide full-time care for their adult children.

DOLLY, THANK YOU!

Dedication and Commitment are two words that definitely describe Dolly Stuart. For over 12 years, Dolly has volunteered in every aspect of this organization. Soon after she became a member at the local level, she immediately jumped in and became involved with People First. But this was only the beginning. Of course, with her willingness to serve, she agreed to be The Arc of Colorado representative from The Arc of Aurora. Within a year, Dolly was voted in as the 1st Vice President of The Arc of Colorado. But these were only the steps that led to Dolly being the leader and President of this organization for over five years. That is truly an unbelievable amount of commitment!

No one can deny the time and effort that Dolly has given to The Arc. And, it's not like she didn't have anything else to do. Dolly ran a very successful business of her own which also took a lot of her time but she always found the time to dedicate herself to Arc business. All of her activities are quite numerous. During her terms as President, she served on every committee imaginable. Besides the required Executive, Personnel, and Finance committees, she was involved in ICE, Health Care Reform, Guardianship, and the ever-important Law Suit committee, to name a few. Dolly never stops! She represented the State of Colorado at every Arc National Conference from 1994 – 2000. And finally, Dolly received the My Hero Volunteer of the Year for all of her efforts. Congratulations!

ABSOLUTELY AMAZING! WHAT A VOLUNTEER!