



12-074

TO: Illinois Health Facilities and Services Board

FROM: Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago

RE: Closure of Jacksonville Developmental Center

DATE: October 10, 2012

Access Living is the Center for Independent Living (CIL) for the metropolitan Chicago area and a member of the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living (INCIL). The mission of CILs is to support and empower people with disabilities to live in their own homes in the community, with the general policy that those settings consist of four beds or less. CILs are run by a majority of staff and board members who have disabilities themselves.

As the largest and oldest CIL in the state, Access Living has long been involved in efforts to end the unnecessary institutionalization of people with disabilities in Illinois, with an emphasis on the institutional settings of SODCs, ICF-DDs, IMDs and long term care nursing facilities. Access Living helped spearhead the three *Olmstead* class action cases in Illinois and has been a supporter of the Governor's Rebalancing Initiative. Our major reasons for doing this work are threefold:

- People with disabilities who require an institutional level of care as determined by HFS should have their needs met in community based settings of four beds or less at every opportunity possible given that the ADA's Title II contains an community integration mandate;
- People with disabilities served in the community end up costing the state less because on balance community services are less expensive than institutional services, and therefore a larger number of people can be served in community services;
- Based on our experience as a provider of community integration services, we find that the vast majority of our consumers have a deep desire to live in their own homes and are much happier there than in institutional settings.

We furthermore believe that Illinois needs to continue phasing out its shameful practice of warehousing people with disabilities in large institutional settings; in other words, the front door needs to be shut to such places. We believe that families need to be supported in securing community based services that meet the needs of the individual, in or as close to their home community as possible to prevent needless isolation.

We urge the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Board to close Jacksonville Developmental Center for the following reasons in addition to the ones above:

- It has been repeatedly stated that the Jacksonville facility is in need of very expensive repairs. We would rather see the repair money spent on expanding community services for the JDC residents.
- It is unconscionable in an era of austerity that we have spent a great deal of money on JDC while 30,000 people with developmental disabilities are waiting for desperately needed community based services and settings.
- Supporting JDC residents in safe community settings, in accordance with their guardians, should be the state's priority, as it should be for all advocates of disability rights. JDC should not be kept open simply because it provides jobs. It is not true that JDC workers are "family" when the "family" get wages, paid vacation and time off. JDC enables a continued violation of *Olmstead* rights. Our society would not permit similar segregation on the basis of race. The town of Jacksonville needs to expand its economy and ability to provide community based services and empowerment for people with disabilities, in settings of four beds or less.

Any questions or follow up can be directed to Amber Smock, Director of Advocacy for Access Living at (312) 640-2191 or asmock@accessliving.org.