

Privatization of Publicly Operated Residential Services For People with Developmental Disabilities

The Department of Health and Hospitals announced on December 30, 2009 that the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) would accelerate their process of transitioning residents of state-operated community homes to privately-run providers to achieve necessary mid-year budget savings. This transition will involve 156 residents and a vocational program at Columbia serving approximately 40 individuals.

The decision to use the more cost efficient services of private providers will allow DHH to trim expenses and avoid further cuts to other essential services and programs. In addition, community home residents will have an opportunity to move into their own homes with waiver support services, allowing them to be more fully included in their communities. Private agencies can and do provide the same services to people with developmental disabilities as state employees. However, adequate funding for the Community Living Ombudsman Program (CLOP) will be necessary to ensure quality program monitoring and advocacy services are available to residents of these additional privately operated community homes.

There has also been public discussion about the privatization of one or more of the state's six large developmental centers in an effort to achieve cost savings. While cost efficiency is certainly desirable, **the most important goal should be implementation of best practice** to achieve the highest quality of life for people with developmental disabilities. **Best practice includes:**

- People with developmental disabilities being served in their own homes and communities with individualized supports and services.
- People with developmental disabilities receiving needed supports in a timely manner; NOT waiting years for those needed supports.

Louisiana should NOT privatize large publicly operated developmental centers because this may end the current trend of downsizing, stopping the flow of people and resources into the community.

- OCDD has been downsizing its state developmental centers over the past three decades – not as quickly as the rest of the nation, or as quickly as community advocates would like – but the state has been moving in the right direction.
- That trend has accelerated under current OCDD Assistant Secretary Kathy Kliebert's leadership with the development of a plan leading to the eventual closure of several centers.
- This downsizing is resulting in an improved quality of life for former center residents living in their own homes and the eventual closure will allow resources to serve many more people in the community.