

## CAU – Institution Closings – Web Site

### Enlightened Legislation

Newly proposed legislation (A3625) to close five of New Jersey's seven institutions for people with developmental disabilities is both enlightened and cost-effective. The legislation, introduced this month by Assemblyman Louis Greenwald (D-Camden), will more closely and properly align New Jersey with the national trend of moving people with developmental disabilities out of institutions and into community living, while also more efficiently allocating scarce budget dollars.

There is ample reason to applaud and support this bill, both financial and moral. First the financial reasons.

- Nearly 3,000 New Jersey residents live in developmental centers at an annual cost of about \$225,000 each, or two to three times the average cost of community living. Compare that with the cost for providing community housing for members of Community Access Unlimited (CAU), which runs just \$50,00 to \$80,000 annually.
- New Jersey's seven developmental centers consume 31 percent of the \$1.4 billion budget of the Division of Developmental Disabilities while serving less than 8 percent of the population served by the department.
- While the rest of the nation recognizes the benefits of reducing their institutional populations, New Jersey lags far behind the national average. Since 1969, 140 institutions have been closed throughout the nation, yet only two of those were in New Jersey and the state is not one of the 40 states that plan additional closings.
- Nine states no longer operate large institutions. Of the remainder, nearly half serve an institution population of 375 or fewer (versus 3,000 in New Jersey).
- When compared with statewide personal income, New Jersey's spending on institutions ranks sixth in the nation while our investment in community living places us 40<sup>th</sup>.

Clearly the numbers support closing New Jersey's developmental centers. But so does our moral obligation to ensure we are maximizing the ability of each member of society to live fulfilling lives. Community living offers people with developmental disabilities the opportunity to live in their own homes while receiving the supports they need. They contribute to the fabric of society, in many ways financial – buying goods and services and often paying taxes – while building self-esteem.

We began CAU in 1979 by successfully removing 20 people with developmental disabilities from institutional living and integrating them into the community. Today we assist more than 3,500 individuals with all kinds of disabilities each year, many of whom become outspoken advocates for community living. This legislation recognizes that community living is the most rewarding option for people with developmental disabilities – and the most cost-effective.

Sidney Blanchard  
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