

NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNITY PROVIDERS, INC.

NJACP

Advancing Quality Services for
People with Developmental Disabilities

**Testimony by Kim Todd
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New Jersey Association of Community Providers
Senate Budget & Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
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***Right Sizing the Community Based System
Can We Afford to Wait?***

The New Jersey Association of Community Providers, Inc. (NJACP) is a professional association committed to ensuring continuing progress toward greater quality of life for people with developmental disabilities (DD) and brain injuries. NJACP is a statewide advocacy organization of community based private organizations that provide an essential foundation of services and supports including group homes, supported living and a full range of community services for individuals with developmental disabilities both in agency residences and at home with their families. Agencies also provide vocational training and placement, supported employment, family support, case management, recreational programs and self-directed services. NJACP agencies collectively provide services to over 35,000 individuals and represent 74 percent of all community based DD services in New Jersey.

New Jersey's fiscal situation threatens our ability to move ahead with the state's plan to incorporate a consumer driven system meeting the mandates of the Olmstead decision and the Department of Justice lawsuits. Progress is unlikely when we struggle with stabilizing our community based service system. Although it is one of the richest states in the nation, New Jersey lags behind 42 other states in funding community services for individuals with developmental disabilities. Only three other states use large public developmental centers at a higher rate than our state.

We believe right-sizing the community based system to provide ready access to services and supports in communities should be a priority. Our progress has been stalled by an incremental approach that will take many years to accomplish while people languish in developmental centers. New Jersey has an obligation to support individuals' right to live in their communities supported by person-centered planning and freedom of choice for all individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Although we promise families that there will be consumer-driven systems, person-centered planning and freedom of choice, few have benefited. At best, we accomplish small gains in our ability to create real systems change. Our ability to support individuals in community settings is hampered by the lack of investment in community capacity. The budget of \$50m allocated over a three year period has permitted 259 people to move from developmental centers since 2005. There are 100 more planned transfers in FY'08, and plans for 250 additional people to be moved each year thereafter. In SFY'07, 101 individuals were admitted to developmental centers, while 102 transitioned to the community and 55 people died. We would point out that of the developmental center census, 2,457 of people or 81% already have recommendations for community placement. At the same time, an additional 1,728 individuals remain confined to nursing homes or psychiatric hospitals. There are 8,065 additional individuals on the Community Services Waiting List. Individuals may wait for services on the Community Services Waiting List for years. While individuals leave in incremental numbers, others find themselves returning. Last year over 300 individuals returned to developmental centers as emergency placements and others found themselves in out of state placements. These are indicators that the system is not right sized.

Despite the clear benefits to the people we serve and the evident need for services, we do not invest in expanding capacity or addressing infrastructure needs to ensure a strong community services system. Although agencies have