

Illinois Health Facilities and Services Board
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HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD

Members of the Board:

My name is David A. Iacono-Harris and I have a son who has made the Jacksonville Developmental Center his home for the past nine years. Jonathan was born with developmental problems through no fault of his own. He is moderately mentally retarded and has been diagnosed over his 40 years with multiple mental and emotional ailments. He is currently diagnosed as schizophrenic.

My ex-spouse and I adopted Jonathan when he was six. He had lived with us for two years as a foster child, after having been abused in many ways by his mother, her boyfriends, his grandparents, and other members of his biological family. Our fondest hope was that Jonathan would one day be able to become partly independent and live in a community setting with the proper support. After many years of "institutionalization" we tried to "deinstitutionalize" Jonathan and agreed to place him in a community setting—twice! Both attempts ended in failure. Jonathan completely physically destroyed both community setting houses and has remained "institutionalized" ever since. The Jacksonville Developmental Center has been a wonderful home for Jonathan and the staff members have been wonderful care providers to Jonathan, even through his most trying periods.

I urge you to vote to disallow the closure of Jacksonville Developmental Center for many reasons:

1. Despite what all the "experts," "advocates," parents, and developmentally disabled persons who are currently living in and thriving in community houses say, it is simply not the case that ALL developmentally disabled persons need to, want to, and should live in community houses. Anyone who professes that any one solution to any problem meets all the possible variables is a fool!
2. Although it is constitutional, it is certainly not democratic that one person, Governor Quinn, should have the authority to make the decision to close state institutions.
3. With the closure of Jacksonville Developmental Center and the impending closure of Murray Developmental Center, there will be no State Operated Developmental Center (SODC) in the middle of the state—the nearest SODC will be about 3 hours away!
4. There are simply not enough appropriate community placements for the persons being evicted from the Jacksonville Developmental Center! Look at the number of persons who remain to be placed. Look at the process of placement—sending persons out for "pre-placement" visits with all of their belongings, telling lies to parents and guardians about their options, designating many persons for placement at the end of each month rather than having an orderly and even transition, and placing persons in settings that will, in the long run, prove to be inappropriate and harmful.
5. From the beginning of this process state officials and representatives of Community Resource Associates have lied to parents and guardians and have been less than helpful to any parents and guardians who have questioned the process.

Institutionalization is not a dirty word. The Jacksonville Developmental Center is a wonderful home to some persons who need institutional support. If institutionalization means having caring and adequate

support staff, medical, psychological, and psychiatric care available when it is needed, and peace of mind for parents, relatives, and guardians who love those for whom they cannot provide the care themselves, then institutionalization is a good word.

Respectfully submitted,

David A. Iacono-Harris, MSSW, Ph.D.