

COMMUNITY NOW!

... promoting inclusive communities for all people marginalized because of a disability



MISSION

Community Now! is a statewide nonprofit organization passionately committed to promoting inclusive communities for all Texans often marginalized because of a disability.

WE BELIEVE...

Our loved ones with disabilities should have the option to live in their communities and not languish on long waiting lists for services or forced to live in a dangerous, dehumanizing segregated institution.

The services for our citizens with disabilities must be nothing short of exceptional and that those responsible for providing these services must be held accountable.

Public policy and tax dollars must be aligned to support Texans with disabilities who want to live in smaller, more cost efficient settings in their communities and no longer support the waste and abuse of a failed institutional system.

Texas Legislature Passes Budget

Texas lawmakers approved a budget for the next biennium, fiscal years 2012-2013, spending \$15 billion less than the current budget.

The Health and Human Services budget was cut by \$11.3 billion.

Medicaid reimbursements were underfunded by \$4.8 billion in hopes that it would not be needed in 2013. A decision based on the belief that because of changes in law - federal and state, and a recovering economy, costs may decrease.

There were other options 1) close tax loop holes 2) consolidate and close at least one State Supported Living Center 3) use the rainy day fund and *more* - options that were ignored.

“No man can put a chain about the ankle of his fellow man without at last finding the other end fastened about his own neck”

Frederick Douglass, speech, Civil Rights Mass Meeting, 1883

If you are not satisfied with decisions made this legislative session it is not too late to take action. Elections will be held in 2012 – make your vote count!

What's next? Governor Perry has until June 19, 2011 to sign bills passed during the regular session, veto them, or allow the bills to become law without his signature. As additional information becomes available updates will be posted on the CN! website.

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Independence from waiting. Freedom from institutions.

Long Term Care Reform

...an issue we should all get behind

Freedom is never **voluntarily** given by the oppressor; it must be
DEMANDED by the *oppressed*. ~ MLK, Jr.

The institutional bias in Texas must change, and systems reform implemented, if the state is going to improve services for its citizens who live life with a disability label.

While Texas has moved some individuals who have a disability into community-based placements, they are still accepting admissions and are considerably slower at reducing the use of large congregate institutions, such as State Supported Living Centers (SSLC) and other large ICF/MR facilities. In fact, Texas ranks 49th for Medicaid services provided to individuals who have an intellectual and developmental disability (ID/DD), with the largest number of institutions and residents aged 21 and under.

At least 10 states have closed their institutions and others have developed plans for closure - relying instead on Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) for individuals who have a disability including those with the most involved needs. Texas has not kept up with national trends and the desire to implement reform does not appear to be a priority for Texas Legislators. As Senator Steve Ogden said when asked why the Rider to close at least 1 SSLC was removed from the Budget bill he stated: "There is no political will to close a State Supported Living Center."

If Texas continues to invest heavily in institutions, individuals who desire to live in the community will continue to wait 4-9 years or longer on an "interest list" for community-based services. And for those unable to wait, the only option will be placement at a SSLC or other ICF/MR facility. An investment that results in individuals not being served in the most integrated setting possible - a violation of the Olmstead Act.

If you think Texas can do better, please consider how you can get involved. Community Now! is looking for volunteers to help facilitate trainings and set up regional networks to strengthen grassroots advocacy efforts. We are also collecting real life stories that document the impact cuts have in a person's life. As Bob Kafka, ADAPT Texas often says: "Don't Mourn, ORGANIZE!" Together we are stronger.

For more information contact: Joe Tate at 1-830-305-0613 or through Email: tate392@gmail.com or David Wittie at 1-512-577-8982 or through Email: DavidWittie@yahoo.com.

Follow us on Facebook or join our Yahoo Group - links to both can be found on our website at:
www.communitynowfreedom.org.

Our lives begin to **END** the day we become *silent* about
things that matter. ~ MLK, Jr

Around the State, *news you can use*

INPUT OPPORTUNITY

Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities Seeks Public Input for FY 2012-2016 State Plan

The TCDD requests public comments on the plan's goals and objectives, which support the purpose of the Developmental Disabilities Act of 2000. Comments are due by Tuesday – July 5, 2011. To provide your input visit: http://txddc.state.tx.us/resources/publications/state_plan/stateplanindex.asp.

CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS

Deep in the Heart 39th Annual Convention

National Down Syndrome Congress
August 5-7, 2011 | San Antonio
For more information or to register:
<http://convention.ndscenter.org/>

Improving Post-School Employment for Students with Disabilities: Customized Employment by Norciva Shumpert, Marc Gold & Associates

This three-part series is designed to provide strategies and resources that address transition assessments, work-related training, and customized employment for improved post-school employment results.
July 25-27, 2011 | 9 – 4 | ESC 11 – Ft. Worth
For more information or to register:
https://mis.esc11.net/Session.asp?Wksp_Num=002185

"Journey Through the Autism Spectrum"

Presenters: Paula Kluth & Temple Grandin
Spectrum Training Systems, Inc.

The Inclusive Classroom

September 15, 2011 | Houston

The Way I See It, and Developing Talents: Careers for Individuals with Asperger's and High-Functioning Autism

September 16, 2011 | Houston

For more information or to register:
<http://www.spectrumtrainingsystemsinc.com/houston.html>

Person Centered Thinking & Plan Facilitation

The Institute for Person Centered Practices
Person Centered Thinking | **August 8-9, 2011**
Plan Facilitation | **August 10-11, 2011**
Both sessions will be held in College Station
For more information or to register (required):
<http://www.pcpinstitute.org/about.htm>

Texas Advocates Conference - 2011

August 26 – 28, 2011 | San Antonio
For more information or to register:
www.thearcoftexas.org

Why Problem Behavior Occurs & Why It Is Important to Know the Answer

TX – Department of Aging and Disability Services
August 4-5, 2011 | Waco
For more information or to register:
<http://www.kessjones.com/PBMWorkshop.html>

With A Little Help from Our Friends...

7th Annual Parent to Parent Conference
June 24-25, 2011 | San Marcos
For more information or to register:
<http://www.txp2p.org/training/conference.html>

Wrightslaw Special Education and Advocacy Law Conference with Pete Wright, Esq.

National Autism Association – North Texas
October 20, 2011 | 9:00 – 4:30 | Plano
For information or to register, visit:
<http://www.wrightslaw.com/speak/11.10.tx.htm>

CONSUMER DIRECTED SERVICES – TOWN HALL MEETINGS

DADS, in collaboration with the Texas HHSC, will be holding a series of free town hall meetings across the state to provide an opportunity for individuals, family members, service providers, and the general public to learn more about the Consumer Directed Services (CDS) option. For dates and locations, visit:

<http://www.kessjones.com/CDS/index.htm>

Texas' State Supported Living Centers

...a system of State funded abuse

After pouring millions of dollars into 13 Facilities, adding cameras to the common areas, assigning an Ombudsman, increasing staff and additional interventions, abuse and neglect continues. There have been over 2,000 complaints of abuse and neglect filed since 2009, and of those reports over 200 have been substantiated. Some of the 2010 & 2011 substantiated allegations include...

- showing the resident pornographic images stored on a cell phone and asking the resident to engage in sex
- throwing the resident to the ground, kneeling the resident in the throat and twisting the resident's arm behind his back
- acting in concert, physically abused a client by hitting the client with an ironing board and in the face
- intentionally placing hot fire sauce in a resident's drink and then allowing the resident to consume the drink
- prompting another individual to assault the resident
- over medicated clients causing one client to be transported to the hospital for overdose treatment
- mixed Tang with a liquid thickener resulting in the client aspirating and being hospitalized with serious lung injuries
- struck a client on the head with a metal bell three times resulting in a 1 inch laceration on the scalp area
- placing the client in a "sleeping hold" causing the client to go into a state of unconsciousness for short period of time
- a client passed away; during investigation allegations of abuse and neglect were made involving the client – there was evidence discovered to support allegations of neglect & abuse of five staff members



May 26, 2011, 29 advocates for persons who have a disability gathered at the Austin State Supported Living Center and strung a clothesline of over 200 confirmed reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation perpetrated on residents of Texas' 13 such institutions. Calling the demonstration an airing of the state's dirty laundry, advocates pointed out the Legislature is adopting a state budget that would preserve the expensive, unsafe system of institutions despite declining resident populations and widespread abuse while simultaneously cutting cost-effective community services for persons with disabilities.

STOP wasting lives and tax payer money. Close/Consolidate and redirect funding into the community.

"In my view, there is nothing more vicious and outrageous than the abuse, exploitation and harm of the most vulnerable members of our society, and I firmly believe that our nation's laws and resources need to reflect the seriousness of these terrible crimes." – Bob Ney

Community-Based Long-Term Care Services

...support services that provide daily health care and living needs

What are Long Term Care Services?

Long term care services provide help with daily health care and living needs for *qualified* individuals who have a long-term illness or disability.

What is a Medicaid Wavier Program?

Medicaid Waiver Programs fund long-term care supports that help people (of all ages) who have a disability, blindness, or who are aging, live in the community instead of an institutional setting. In Texas there are 9 Medicaid Wavier Programs. Within each program you will find different eligibility requirements, rules, service options and funding amounts. Most waivers consider the income of the person applying for services not the family income. Below is a list of Waiver Programs in Texas:

- Community Living Assistance and Support Services – CLASS
- Community Based Alternatives – CBA
- Consolidated Waiver Program – CWP (Available in Bexar County only)
- Deaf/Blind Multiple Disabilities – DB/MD
- Home and Community-based Services – HCS
- Medically Dependent Children’s Program – MDCP
- Star + Plus
- Texas Home Living – TxHmL (the only waiver that considers family income)
- Youth Empowerment Services – YES (Travis and Bexar counties only: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mhsa/yes/>)

These services are not immediately available. When you call to access services you will be placed on an “interest list” known to individuals who have a disability and their family members as a waiting list. The waiting period will vary per waiver program, usually between 4-9 years – Call TODAY!

Additional Services

- Children with Special Health Care Needs – CSHCN (available through the Department of State Health Services – DSHS: (<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/cshcn/>))
- Community Mental Health Mental Retardation – MHMR Services (to find your local MHMR center visit: <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/services/contact.cfm>)
- Early Childhood Intervention – ECI (available through DARS)
- Department of Rehabilitative Services - DARS, Employment Services
- In-Home and Family Support Services – IHFS
- School Services (contact your local School District for additional information)
- Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program – STAP (available through DARS)

For specific information about Texas Medicaid Waiver Programs or other long-term care services visit: <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/ltss/>.

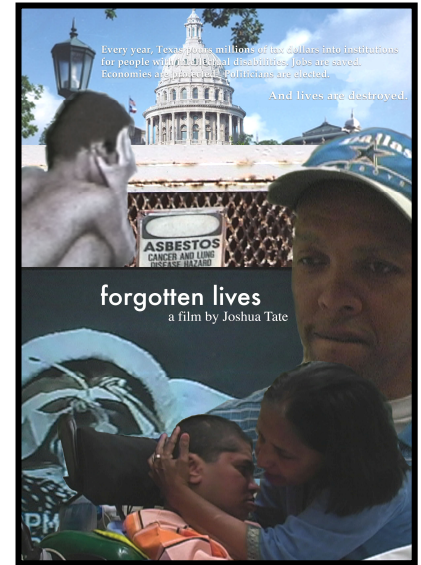
For specific information about programs available through the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services – DARS visit: <http://www.dars.state.tx.us/>.

Those who deny **FREEDOM** of others deserve it not of themselves.

- Abraham Lincoln



Community Now!
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Forgotten Lives, A film by Joshua Tate

Forgotten Lives is a 44 minute award winning film that chronicles the horror and abuse perpetrated against Texas' most vulnerable citizens inside state institutions and offers hope for a future of freedom and dignity in the community.



The Big Question

© By Kathie Snow – *Disability is Natural*
www.disabilityisnatural.com.

I have a Big Question, and I hope someone can answer it. I've asked this question to some heavy-hitters in the disability arena, and they don't have The Answer.

Here's The Question: If all of our Federal disability-related laws—the Rehab Act of 1973, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)—along with the Olmstead Supreme Court decision implicitly and/or explicitly prohibit discrimination of people with disabilities and mandate integration/inclusion, why do the vast majority of Federally-funded programs and services (SSI, Medicaid, special ed funding, and more) result in the segregation of children and adults with disabilities?

I don't get it; do you? Is the answer as simple (and outrageous) as the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing? Is it because special interest groups (for employees of nursing homes, congregate living facilities, day programs, public schools, etc.) are so powerful that they call the shots and segregated settings serve *their* needs? If you've got the answer—or even an idea—write to me: <http://www.disabilityisnatural.com/contact>. I'll add the most commonsense and/or realistic ideas to this page. Maybe we can figure it out together.

"The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men." – John F. Kennedy