



COMMUNITY NOW!

Independence from waiting. Freedom from institutions.

Dear Assistant Commissioner Scott Schalchlin,

March 5, 2014

Community Now! is deeply disturbed to learn of the preventable death of 35 year old Sean Yates, who disappeared from the Corpus Christi State Supported Living Center (CCSSLC) on January 30, 2014. The discovery of his body under the Harbor Bridge on February 22, along with reports of other recent incidents of abuse and neglect, raise serious questions about whether CCSSLC is fit to continue serving persons with disabilities.

According to the latest report by the Office of the Independent Ombudsman for State Supported Living Centers (OIO), from June to November 2013, the ombudsman received a total of 56 contacts regarding violations of residents' rights, reports of abuse and neglect, or issues with the delivery of residential services at CCSSLC. The number of contacts regarding CCSSLC is significantly higher than those reported for any other facility, including forensic facilities. Additionally, the report indicates that CCSSLC is lagging significantly behind other facilities in transitioning residents to less restrictive settings - a rate of just over one individual per month<sup>1</sup>. This is particularly appalling given that State Supported Living Centers were at one time intended to prepare residents for eventual community placements.

The Corpus Christi State Supported Living Center failed to serve Mr. Yates, who, according to news reports, had lived there for nearly 11 years and at one point had resided at home with his family<sup>2</sup>. In addition to doubts as to whether facilities with egregious records of abuse and neglect can appropriately serve persons with disabilities, there is the question of whether services and supports could have been made available that would have enabled Mr. Yates to remain at home with his family. If Mr. Yates entered CCSSLC because of a lack of appropriate home and community-based supports, then it is not only the facility that failed him, but also the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) and the Texas Legislature.

A culture that fosters abuse and neglect and places a low priority on community placement is not exclusive to CCSSLC. Data from the Department of Justice and the OIO continues to demonstrate that State Supported Living Centers across Texas are all failing to serve nearly 3,500 individuals in a manner consistent with professional standards of care for persons with disabilities. In this tight budget climate, Texas cannot afford to continue misappropriating millions of general revenue dollars on a program that consistently fails to meet basic standards.

Community NOW! respectfully requests that the Department of Aging and Disability Services immediately instate a moratorium on all non-forensic admissions to the CCSSLC, and to implement an enhanced transition program for the residents of CCSSLC.

Sincerely,

Joe Tate  
Policy Specialist, Community NOW!  
On behalf of the Community NOW! Board of Directors

<sup>1</sup> Office of the Independent Ombudsman for State Supported Living Centers. Bi-Annual Report: June 2013 through November 2013. Retrieved from: <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/SSLCombusdman/reports/biannual-june2013-nov2013.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> KLTV News. February 26, 2014. Retrieved from: <http://www.kltv.com/story/24833788/family-of-man-found-dead-in-corpus-christi-it-could-have-been-prevented>

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