

NASDDDS's Statement Regarding Quality of Services for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

The members of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS) are committed to providing quality services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and are very concerned whenever there are reports of abuse and neglect. Any failure to protect individuals from harm, respect their rights as citizens, or provide services that are necessary to live and participate successfully in their communities must be acted upon swiftly and decisively.

The recent *New York Times* article, "At State-Run Homes, Abuse and Impunity," raises issues about the oversight of state-operated homes for people with developmental disabilities in New York. The *Times* report calls for a full investigation by the New York State Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) to get at the root of the problem and take action to remedy what is discovered. That process has been initiated by the newly appointed acting commissioner of OPWDD.

State developmental disability agencies support one million citizens with developmental disabilities and their families nationwide. Investigations and sanctions are strategies that states employ to address system failures and problematic events. Proactively, states work to structure systems that will assure quality and protect rights through on-going programs of monitoring and remediation. State oversight systems are enhanced by the work of federally funded Protection and Advocacy organizations that play a key role in guarding individual rights.

And now the rise of self-advocacy among people with developmental disabilities has revealed their capacity to speak out about injustice themselves. Their voice is strengthened when they are supported and have access to those who can remedy wrongs.

President Obama's declaration of the Year of Community Living underscores the right of people with disabilities to live the life they choose, to enjoy the rights of citizenship, and to receive the supports necessary to live in the community. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services has promoted the expansion of community services and implemented a system of oversight of state programs. As a nation, we have made significant progress in helping people with disabilities enjoy fulfilling lives in and as part of the community.

When we discover a hole in the fabric of any part of our service systems that support people with developmental disabilities, we must vigorously evaluate the adequacy of our practices to protect people and address deficiencies promptly.

State directors of developmental disabilities services are committed to managing systems that are transparent, involve self-advocates and families, and are accountable to the public. State service systems for people with developmental disabilities are founded on the belief that people with developmental disabilities have a right to:

- be safe in their homes and communities;
- be treated with respect and dignity;
- be independent and make individual choices;
- participate in family and community life; and
- have opportunities to work and contribute to their community.

For further information, contact Nancy Thaler, Executive Director, 703-683-4202; nthaler@nasdds.org.