

Parents and Associates of the Northern Virginia Training Center

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www.parentsandassociatesnvtc.com

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Dear Legislator:

In our role as Co-Presidents of Parents and Associates of the Northern Virginia Training Center, we thank you for all your work in maintaining the continuum of care and “Helping People Live Life” in whatever setting is most appropriate for their care and well being. The Virginia legislature’s support of rebuilding SEVTC is testimony to a value system that supports choice, the needs of the individual, and the involvement of families.

As you undertake the enormous task of addressing the Commonwealth’s budget and the revenue challenges it faces, our parents wish to outline the importance of the health and welfare of those who reside in Training Centers for persons with profound intellectual disabilities. The Department of Behavioral Health and Disability Services (DBHDS) operate five Training Centers throughout the Commonwealth. The residents of these Training Centers have significant cognitive and physical disabilities, and many of these are associated with severe medical and complex behavioral challenges. For many, Training Centers are the only possible environment in which to live. They provide essential services to the residents as well as to those in the community who receive outpatient services and respite stays from the Training Centers.

The treatment and care of our Training Center residents requires a staff of persons who are trained to manage and treat the challenging conditions that are associated with these disabilities. Additionally, with their expertise in care and treatment, the “Regional Community Support Centers” (RCSC) at the Training Centers provide medical, clinical, and rehabilitative supports to hundreds of individuals with intellectual disabilities who reside in the Community who either cannot afford services or access them. Community Services Boards (CSBs) serve as the access points to the Centers’ RCSC.

Training Centers are the intensive care level of Virginia’s services for people with intellectual disabilities. They provide for those persons who require twenty-four hour access to care and treatment by physicians, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational, physical and speech therapists, and direct support professionals, as prescribed by a carefully constructed Individual Rehabilitative Plan. The Center staff operates as a team, where it addresses new and complex problems through the interchange of ideas among professionals who are educated and trained to resolve them.

The Commonwealth has a critical investment in providing assistance to those receiving care from Training Centers. Their needs are continuous and can occupy every hour of the day. Truly our Training Centers are “Centers of Excellence”, offering the necessary safety net as well as a high quality of life to some of Virginia’s most vulnerable citizens.

There remains controversy, however, over whether persons with intellectual disabilities should reside in Training Centers. Indeed, there are those who want Training Centers closed.

We believe that no one should be forced to live in a Training Center. We also believe, however, that for those who qualify for Training Center level care and who choose this placement, it should be made available. There will always be some who, although they meet eligibility requirements for the Training Centers, will choose instead to live in the Community.

The Olmstead Supreme Court decision is often referenced by those who wish to close Centers. Olmstead, however, is about choice and appropriate settings for meeting the unique needs of each person and NOT about closing facilities. The Community does not have the capability to provide the intensive level of care for ALL of those living at Training Centers. Cost is another factor that is often referenced by those who wish to close our Centers. Contrary to what some say, the cost of comparable care in the Community is not necessarily cheaper, and in fact may be higher, when all services needed by an individual are included (please see attachments).

As you address budgetary choices in the coming year, we strongly urge that you provide the funding that is necessary to continue these critical services to some of our most challenged citizens. This is an investment of which the Commonwealth should be proud. We strongly encourage your continued support of Training Centers. Thank you for all you do for our citizens.

Sincerely,

Co- Presidents of NVTC Parents & Associates

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