

Privatization of Publicly Operated Residential Services For People with Developmental Disabilities

There has been public discussion about the privatization of some or all of the services provided by the state Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) in an effort to achieve cost savings. OCDD currently serves:

- 1,078 people in six large developmental centers (supports and services centers);
- 166 people in 33 community homes, and
- 42 people in their own homes in the community through the New Opportunities Waiver.

While cost efficiency is certainly desirable, **the most important goal should be implementation of best practice** to achieve the highest quality of life for people with developmental disabilities. **Best practice includes:**

- People with developmental disabilities being served in their own homes and communities with individualized supports and services.
- People with developmental disabilities receiving needed supports in a timely manner; NOT waiting years for those needed supports.

Louisiana should NOT privatize large publicly operated developmental centers because this may end the current trend of downsizing, stopping the flow of people and resources into the community.

- OCDD has been downsizing its state developmental centers over the past three decades – not as quickly as the rest of the nation, or as quickly as community advocates would like – but the state has been moving in the right direction.
- That trend has accelerated under current OCDD Assistant Secretary Kathy Kliebert's leadership with the development of a plan leading to the eventual closure of several centers.
- This downsizing is resulting in an improved quality of life for former center residents living in their own homes and the eventual closure will allow resources to serve many more people in the community.

Louisiana should, however, privatize all community homes and waiver services currently operated by OCDD. Private agencies can and do provide the same services to people with developmental disabilities as state employees. The savings derived from this transfer should be used to serve people on the waiver waiting list.

If any developmental center is privatized, a provision should be included in the contract to mandate continued downsizing and eventual closure of the facility.