

Source: Studio 5, KSL Television & Radio, Salt Lake City UT

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There are a lot of resources for parents raising children and adults with intellectual disabilities. But parents don't always know what help is available.

The Utah Health Care Association wants Utah families to know about intermediate care facilities for people with intellectual disabilities [a/k/a ICFs/MR, a federally certified and licensed Medicaid residential option for people with intellectual disabilities; nearly all states provide this option to their citizens]

Imagine you're a 79-year old woman with an intellectually disabled 53-year old son. You're growing older and require care for yourself, and your son needs even more care, including 24-hour support and assistance with his medical needs.

Next, imagine having a family of several children including one child who is severely intellectually disabled requiring constant, high-level care. Both you and your spouse must work full-time to provide for your family's needs and cannot always be there. Plus, you may not have the skills necessary to give your child with special needs everything he or she needs...

Now - imagine having an overly active teenage son who is intellectually disabled. He has grown up with his friends and has watched them go off to college and move on with their lives. He, like other young men his age, demands independence from his parents, but requires constant physical and medical supervision.

These are a few true stories from a list of thousands. These families, like many others, have turned for help to Utah's Intermediate Care Facilities for the Intellectually Disabled, also known as ICFs/ID.

Unfortunately, there are myths and mistruths related to Utah's ICFs/ID. It's time to present the truth about the benefits, professional care and personal support services provided to those individuals with intellectual disabilities in Utah.

In today's society, we all have a greater understanding, acceptance and appreciation for our intellectually disabled citizens, it's vital that the Utah Health Care Association and their ICFs/ID members share the truth, so that you will understand the vital role these facilities have in the lives of the thousands of Utahans who require assistance.

Fiction:

ICFs/ID are institutional environments that warehouse people with disabilities.

FACT :

ICFs/ID are welcoming residential homes in neighborhoods throughout the state, in which each person:

- 1) self-directs his or her own acts of daily living; and
- 2) is involved in professionally developed educational and/or training programs; and
- 3) participates in supervised vocational training programs; and/or

- 4) is employed locally in their community; and
- 5) chooses their extracurricular activities such as community outings; and
- 6) establishes relationships with others with similar interests and needs; and
- 7) is encouraged to personalize his or her own room.

"ICFs/ID provide a consistent provision of steady, structured routine activities that allow our son to interact with others that have mutual challenges which, in turn, cause him to grow and attain more depth as a person. The diverse ICF staff has had a profound effect on our son as they guide, lead, care and love him for the good human being he is. "

- Catherine and Michael
Parents of Michael, 33

Fiction:

ICF/ID residents have no contact with their families. Families have no voice in the residents' care or lives.

FACT:

Family members and friends play an integral part of ICF/ID residents' lives. They are welcome at anytime and are encouraged to take their loved ones on outings and vacations and participate in activities at the residents' homes. Family contact is crucial to the continued development of each resident, and an open line of communication between the family and the staff is provided at all times.

"As parents we cannot look after Jordan constantly, because we have two younger sons who also need our attention. We are able to visit her and interact cohesively and having her in this home has kept our family intact and has provided a safe, loving place for Jordan to grow."

- Tonya and Blake
Father and Mother of Jordan, 13

Fiction:

ICF/ID staff are neither qualified nor trained to care for people with intellectual disabilities.

FACT:

Before an individual can become a staff member, he or she is screened and must pass a criminal background check. Upon becoming a staff member, each person receives both initial and ongoing training, education and certifications. ICF/ID staff have an understanding of each resident's needs and genuinely care about their health and wellbeing.

"We knew almost the instant we walked into this home for the first time that this was exactly the type of program we had been searching for. The staff made David and ourselves very comfortable and projected the type of loving, yet disciplined, presence that we knew David needed."

- Kimberly and Michael
Mother and Father of David, 22

Fiction:

ICFs/ID are similar to nursing homes.

FACT:

ICFs/ID specialize in caring for people with intellectual disabilities with the goal to assist each individual to become as independent as possible. Ranging in age from children to elderly, each resident is taught life skills and receives additional training, encouraging them to reach their highest potential.

In addition, ICFs/ID have a large economic impact by providing over 1700 jobs to Utahans, resulting in millions of paid labor dollars and local tax revenue.

"To meet all of Leslie's needs, it takes a team of specialists with the training to reach her and to motivate her to achieve goals that I never thought were possible. The specialists that care for and monitor Leslie's needs have increased her ability to vocalize her needs, taught her skills to help with personal needs and worked with her to socialize within her group. I don't know what I would do if there were not a facility for Leslie and dedicated staff and programs that assist her and help her grow."

- Patricia
Sister of Leslie

Loving environments, enriching learning opportunities and meaningful vocational programs are crucial for the continued development of life skills, independence and overall quality of life. These individualized services, support the level of care and are provided at Utah's Intermediate Care Facilities for the Intellectually Disabled (ICFs/ID).

The result is that each person who calls one of Utah's ICFs/ID home has the opportunity to live his or her life in a loving, nurturing community that embraces health, happiness and dignity with the goal to help each person achieve his or her maximum potential.

We encourage you to visit a local ICF/ID or contact Utah Health Care Association. For more details call (801) 486 - 6100 or visit utahhealthcareassociation.org.