



Toll free  
877-399-4867

[www.vor.net](http://www.vor.net)

Executive Director  
Julie M. Huso  
836 S. Arlington Heights Rd, #351  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007  
605-370-4652 Voice  
605-271-0445 Fax  
[jhuso@vor.net](mailto:jhuso@vor.net)

Dir. of Govt. Relations & Advocacy  
Tamie Hopp  
PO Box 1208  
Rapid City, SD 57709  
605-399-1624 Voice  
605-399-1631 Fax  
[thopp@vor.net](mailto:thopp@vor.net)

Washington, D.C.  
Larry Innis  
529 Bay Dale Court  
Arnold, MD 21012-2312  
410-751-1VOR Voice/Fax  
[LarryInnis@aol.com](mailto:LarryInnis@aol.com)

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## Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs/MR): Inclusive Communities and Good Neighbors

### Providing life-sustaining care 24/7

Federally-licensed Intermediate Care Facilities for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (ICFs/MR) provide highly specialized, life-sustaining supports for our nation's most vulnerable citizens. A typical ICF/MR resident has profound intellectual disabilities, is non-verbal, and has the functional abilities of an infant or toddler. Requiring 24/7 specialized care, most residents are also physically disabled and many residents are also medically fragile or experience significant aggressive or assaultive behaviors.

For the family members, friends and guardians of ICF/MR residents, the consistent provision of highly specialized supports – assured by annual federal oversight surveys – is the highest priority. Beyond care, however, these residents also have a life. They are integral members of their communities – both on campus and off.

### A day in the life of an ICF/MR resident

ICF/MR residents have individualized service plans that expressly mandate community-based activities away from the facility and among their non-disabled neighbors. Beyond the necessary health care, therapies and vocational programs, residents enjoy holiday parades, community events, local restaurants, movies and theatre, swimming, horseback riding, summer picnics, bowling, trips, and more. In addition, thousands of people volunteer on ICF/MR campuses and most are used by other organizations, such as local soccer leagues, state offices, school districts and veterans' groups.

A respected research journal once featured two "Parents' Perspective," including the inclusive nature of their family members' homes:

My daughter, Dianne, age 43, resides in a state-operated ICF/MR . . . the stereotype of 'isolation' (a perceived negative outcome of large ICF/MR placement) is defied . . . Activities include community concerts, sporting events, shows, outings to restaurants, special events, Six Flags, the Texas State Fair, and other activities. These opportunities provide entertainment and true integration with the community surrounding our state facilities. Within the [ICF/MR], the staff, families, friends and volunteers join together to provide parties, holiday celebrations, dances, worship services and other social activities.

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[W]hen Mary Elizabeth lived at the ICF/MR, she . . . regularly went to local restaurants with staff from the facility . . . [A]t least once a week a group of three to five of the ladies in the day program go to Dunkin' Donuts for mid-morning coffee. They go out another day each week on an excursion that may be a picnic at a local beach, lake or park. In the winter they go to the local malls and shop for small personal items. . . . Annually they go to the New England Flower Show in Spring, the Nutcracker ballet at Christmas, and Topsfield Fair in the Fall. [Source: "Outcomes that Matter: A Parents' Perspective," by Mary McTernan, Ph.D. and Nancy Ward, *Mental Retardation*, Volume 43, Number 3, June 2005, pp. 214–220]

### Conclusion

**ICFs/MR are inclusive communities and good neighbors.** The vision of isolated institutions is sorely outdated and obsolete. But, don't take our word for it: **Visit an ICF/MR. Seeing is believing.**