

January 25, 2013



Speaking out for people with intellectual & developmental disabilities



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**Reminders:
Help VOR Grow!**

**Challenge!
Recruit 5 New
VOR Members
Today!**

**Make a Lasting
Impact with a
Will Bequest**

VOR Weekly News Update

News and views for VOR Advocates

Did you receive this as forwarded e-mail? If so, someone thought you would benefit from VOR's information. Please consider [joining VOR](#) and receive this E-News Update publication weekly!

Calendar Reminders

VOR and You

1. Reminder: Quality Matters Survey – Your Voice Counts. Please respond

2. Reminder: [VOR's Nominating Committee seeks individuals interested in serving on the VOR Board. Please respond by January 25.](#)

National News

3. Update on the National Council on Disability's anti-institutional bias

4. Psychiatric patients wait in ERs for days and weeks as inpatient beds are scaled back

State News

5. Oklahoma: Families Fight to Keep Centers for the Developmentally Disabled Open

6. Maryland: Disabled Marylanders join class action over delayed benefits; Lawsuit alleges that state takes too long to process applications for Medicaid

7. Pennsylvania: Federal Hate Crimes Alleged After People With Disabilities Held Captive
Quotable, by John Buchan

Calendar Reminders

* **January 25, 2013**

[Apply to serve on VOR's Board of Directors](#)

* **February 1, 2013**

VOR [Quality Matters Survey](#). Deadline Extended. Your voice counts. Please take VOR's Quality Matter Survey. Details below.

* **Wednesday, February 13 at 12:00 pm central / 1:00 pm mountain**

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advocacy
resource

VOR State Coordinator and Member Webinar (free). Registration details coming soon

* **Sunday, June 9, 2013**

VOR Annual Conference * Washington, D.C. Registration details coming soon

* **Begins Monday, June 10, 2013**

VOR Washington Initiative (Begins Monday, June 10, 2013) * Washington, D.C. Registration details coming soon

VOR and You

1. Reminder: Quality Matters Survey – Your Voice Counts. Please respond

Proponents of deinstitutionalization promise a better life in the “community.” Yet, as VOR choice advocates realize, the promise is far from well-documented reality, resulting in tragedy for thousands of impacted citizens.

As a first step in this Initiative, VOR would like to hear from its members. Our [“Quality Matters” survey](#) identifies several quality “criteria” and asks you to rank them from “non-negotiable” to “not important.”

The survey will take less than 10 minutes. Please respond by February 1, 2013.

Click here to take [VOR’s Quality Matters Survey](#).

THANK YOU!

2. Reminder: [VOR’s Nominating Committee seeks individuals interested in serving on the VOR Board. Please respond by January 25.](#)

National News

3. Update on the National Council on Disability’s anti-institutional bias

COFAR Blog (Massachusetts) * By David Kassel * January 22, 2013

[We wrote here before](#) about the extreme ideological position of the National Council on Disability, which called last month for the closure of all residential facilities for persons with intellectual disabilities with more than three people living in them.

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While COFAR's mission is to advocate on behalf of people with intellectual disabilities, not specifically on behalf of people with mental illness, we are commenting on [NCD's letter \[to Vice President Joe Biden\]](#) because much of the debate over deinstitutionalization of both groups of people has been similar. Certainly, NCD takes the same view in favor of complete deinstitutionalization of both groups, and make the same flawed arguments about each.

In his letter to Biden, Young states that "institutional care has a long-standing history of poor outcomes and civil rights violation (sic) among persons with psychiatric disabilities." At the same time, he bemoans a "profound shortage in community-based services" for people with mental illness.

There are a number of potential contradictions here. First, Young and many other institutional opponents gloss over the fact that many so-called community-based services are institutional in nature. The NCD, in fact, takes this viewpoint to an extreme. With regard to people with intellectual disabilities, the NCD has stated that even community-based group homes are institutional and should be closed down if they have more than three people living in them.

Young and the NCD can't have it both ways. Young talks about a shortage of community-based services and yet he and the NCD want to dismantle much of the community-based infrastructure that exists for people with intellectual disabilities.

Secondly, while institutional care, whether of persons with psychiatric disabilities or intellectual disabilities, has certainly had its problems in the distant past, that care has come a long way. It's deinstitutionalization, which has had the more checkered recent history and the poorer outcomes.

[Read more](#)

[Read VOR's Response to NCD's Toolkit](#)

Read Related Press Releases ([November, 2012](#) and [December 2012](#))

4. Psychiatric patients wait in ERs for days and weeks as inpatient beds are scaled back

Washington Post * January 22, 2013

Summary: A reduction of specialized residential treatment options (deinstitutionalization) leads to increased reliance on emergency room use. See related study, "[Use of Emergency Departments among Working Age Adults with Disabilities: A Problem of Access and Service Needs](#)" (December 26, 2012; National Institutes of Health)

Data on the length of stays for each state aren't centrally kept, but a patchwork of [surveys](#) and reports reveals a growing trend.

As states trimmed their budgets in the economic downturn, resources for mental health patients were among the casualties. Twenty-eight states and the District reduced their mental health funding by a total of \$1.6 billion between fiscal 2009 and 2012.

Virginia, for example, eliminated funding for 19 acute care beds at the Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute in Falls Church in 2010, reducing the total from 129 to 110, though 13 have been restored through temporary funding. Restoring all 19 beds permanently would cost \$1.4 million a year.

Maryland lost 145 — or 12 percent — of its public psychiatric beds between 2005 and 2010, and Virginia lost 252 of its beds, or 15 percent, according to a [2012 report by the Treatment Advocacy Center](#), a nonprofit mental health group. The nonprofit says Maryland and Virginia have a "severe" bed shortage, with 12 to 19 beds per 100,000 people. The District wasn't part of the report, but its mental health department said it increased its bed count by about 20 percent over the past three years, in large part because of the reopening of St. Elizabeths Hospital.

Meanwhile, more and more people are

turning to emergency rooms for health care nationwide. ER visits increased by 32 percent from 1999 to 2009, and overall ER wait times for all sorts of ailments have also gone up, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report. Psychiatric patients make up 7 to 10 percent of emergency room visits, said a 2012 study in the *Emergency Medicine International* journal.

[Read more](#)

State News

5. Oklahoma: Families Fight to Keep Centers for the Developmentally Disabled Open

Fox 25, KOKH-TV (Oklahoma City) * January 21, 2013

Families with loved ones living at the Northern Oklahoma Resource Center in Enid (NORCE) and Southern Oklahoma Resource Center in Pauls Valley (SORC) met Saturday to discuss their plan to fight the decision to close both facilities.

The legislative session begins Monday, February 4. At least two lawmakers have filed legislation in response to the decision to close NORCE and SORC.

[Read more](#)

[Read VOR's related statement and news](#)

6. Maryland: Disabled Marylanders join class action over delayed benefits; Lawsuit alleges that state takes too long to process applications for Medicaid

***The Baltimore Sun* * January 21, 2013**

Citing a severe and chronic backlog, advocacy groups have filed a class-action lawsuit accusing the state of failing low-income and disabled Marylanders by regularly taking nearly a year to approve medical assistance applications.

The lawsuit, filed last week in Baltimore

Circuit Court on behalf of nearly 10,000 disabled adults, seeks to force the Department of Human Resources to approve the Medicaid applications within 60 days, as required by state law. The advocates allege that nearly 46 percent of applications in 2012 were illegally delayed.

7. Pennsylvania: Federal Hate Crimes Alleged After People With Disabilities Held Captive

***Disability Scoop* * January 25, 2013**

In a first-of-its-kind hate crimes case, federal prosecutors are accusing five people of holding individuals with disabilities captive in subhuman conditions in order to steal their Social Security benefits.

A 193-count indictment unsealed Wednesday describes a decade-long scheme by which alleged ringleader Linda Weston convinced people with developmental disabilities and other special needs to make her the designated recipient of their Social Security payments. In exchange, Weston promised them a good place to live.

Instead, prosecutors say Weston, her daughter and three others kept their victims in locked closets, basements and attics while subjecting them to beatings and denying them food and medical attention. Some in Weston's care were allegedly forced into prostitution and two died.

[Read more](#)

[Related Los Angeles Times article](#)

VOR Editor's note: *As noted above, proponents of deinstitutionalization promise a better life in the "community," the promise is far from well-documented reality, resulting in tragedy for thousands of impacted citizens. This will be added to VOR's "[Abuse and Neglect](#)" document. Please take [VOR's Quality Matters Survey](#)*

Quotable

"The task of leadership is not to put greatness into people, but to elicit it, for the greatness is there already." ~ John Buchan

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