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## **New Jersey State Report**

Joanne St. Amand Cindy Bartman

Prior to January 2014, NJ operated 7 Developmental Centers (ICFs). In January 2012, Governor Christie established a 5 member Task Force to determine which state developmental centers should close. His 3 appointments were two members of his senior legal counsel: Craig Domalewski and Colin Newman, and the Executive of National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS), Nancy Thaler. From 2003 until 2006, Thaler worked for the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and was responsible for the development of the Medicaid HCBS waiver application. The Senate President appointed the chief of staff for Senator Van Drew (District 1, South Jersey) and the Assembly Speaker appointed a psychologist for Vineland Developmental Center, which was the center originally selected to close by the NJ Department of Human Services before the Task Force was established.

In July of 2012, the Task Force recommended to close the 2 most northern developmental centers over within 5 years. Governor Christie, however sped up the process and North Jersey Developmental Center (NJDC) was closed June 27, 2014 and Woodbridge Developmental Center (WDC) was closed January 1, 2015 within 2.5 years of the Task Forces decision.

At that time closure was announced there were about 2000+ individuals living in the 7 centers and a waiting list for services of about 8,000. NJDC had a census of 359 individuals: 126 males and 183 females. Of the 359 individuals, 138 went to group homes and 199 to other developmental centers. Eight went to skilled nursing homes, 1 discharged from services and moved out of state with the family, and 13 died at the center before moving. We know several more died soon after the move but the state is not reporting this number. Two of them choked to death within months of moving to group homes and reported in the local papers. This fueled a moratorium bill to slow down the closure which was sponsored by ASW Vainieri-Huttle. The bill received overwhelming support by the full assembly but Senate President Sweeney refused to bring it to a vote before the senate and the closures continued.

WDC had a census of 333 on August 1, 2012: 194 male and 137 females. Of the 333 individuals, 83 went to group homes, and 236 to other developmental centers. Two went to skilled nursing homes, 2 discharged from services, and 10 died at the center before moving. Many passed away shortly after leaving WDC but again, the state is not reporting this number. Through conversations with family

members, we have the names of 25 former WDC residents who died since the closure was announced in July 2012. Three of the deceased were from the cottage of J. St. Amand's sister at WDC which was home to 23 women and hadn't had a resident die in several years prior to the announcement of closure.

## Summary

NJ now operates 5 developmental centers (ICFs), 3 are located in south Jersey, 1 is in the center of the state and one in the western part of the state.

- (1) The overwhelming majority of families did not want to transfer to group homes but were told it was the only way to guarantee a placement close to family. In the end, 70% of the residents from WDC and 55% of the resident from NJDC transferred to the other developmental centers in the state.
- (2) The closure process moved at an alarming rate. Anecdotally we know the death rate was higher than normal during this closure period. Deaths and poor adjustments to the moves (pneumonia, increased seizures, insertion of feeding tubes, increase in self- injurious behaviors, etc.) were experienced by individuals with severe and profound intellectual disabilities.