

Connecticut State Report

June, 2021

My only real connection to Connecticut is the Southbury Training School (STS), which my brother would have called home for the last forty-plus years had he been verbal. Tom passed away from cancer last year, ten days before his 64th birthday. Tom received great care at STS. My family is forever indebted to the staff for the love and understanding they gave Tom, and do still give to all the residents. We are indebted to the music therapists, physical therapists, doctors, dentists, psychiatrists, support staff and groundskeepers, and to the town of Southbury for making this such a special place, a home, a community.

Three members of our staff passed away from COVID in the first half of last year, and one staff member and one resident passed in the months since. The administration did a great job in isolating cases, moving people into the nursing center when they tested positive, and into another step-down quarantine unit until they were no longer contagious and could safely return to their cottages. Again, we are grateful.

On a much different note, Connecticut was one of the last states to still have a public (state-run) Protection and Advocacy Association (P&A). It was staffed mostly by members of the deaf and the blind communities. That all changed overnight, after the Arc and other advocacy groups persuaded legislators to get rid of the public P&A and go private. Bids went out and, lo and behold, Connecticut's P&A was now a part of the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), an extremely powerful conglomerate of dozens of P&A's covering almost every state in the country, yet, remarkably, subject to little or no state oversight (see Ohio State Report). Immediately the people who had worked for the old P&A were dismissed from their jobs, and the policies of the new organization fell in line with those of the NDRN.

In recent months, Disability Rights Connecticut (DRC) has commenced activities relating to STS. So far, they have asked the STS Foundation (a non-profit set up to provide guardianship for STS residents who have no guardian[, including STS residents who have moved into the community]) to provide access to the medical records of Foundation wards who reside at STS. The Foundation denied the request. We fear that they will take further actions designed to close STS and are watching their activities very carefully.

Meanwhile, in "the community", Connecticut's Governor Ned Lamont held off a strike by DSPs in serving people with I/DD in HCBS group homes. A last-minute deal to raise wages stopped the action. However, the workforce of over 10,000 home health care workers who work with people with I/DD were not part of that deal, and are not able to strike. The union is working with the governor to try to get them equitable treatment.

- Hugo Dwyer