

## VOR Illinois State Report 2024

There are 15,742 people with disabilities on the waiting list for services. Even those who have been approved for services can't receive them, mostly due to the shortage of DSPs ( direct support professionals).

The large advocacy groups, such as The ARC of Illinois and IPADD Unite ( Illinois Parents of Adults with Developmental Disabilities) continue their strong advocacy for closing the Illinois SODCs, and moving everyone to community living. The Department of Human Services (DHS) has scheduled "self-advocacy" presentations for the 7 remaining developmental centers to promote this agenda. The number of individuals now living in the seven state centers is 1, 645, which is slightly higher than the number in 2023.

The Illinois Division of Developmental Disabilities, part of DHS, had planned to cut \$87 million in funding which would have eliminated 2.5 million dsp service hours in group homes starting on March 31, 2024. Luckily, so many people called and protested to their legislators that they reversed this decision.

The Illinois General Assembly passed what they called a "maintenance" budget for FY 2025. They were not planning funding increases. The salaries of DSPs was not even on the agenda- zero dollars for a salary increase. Again, due to the advocacy of family members, the budget now includes \$1 per hour increase in salary. Pitiful, I know, but we were happy to even get this small amount.

The Dignity in Pay Act, the bill to eliminate 14c certificates, received bipartisan support in the House, 78 to 30 votes. This measure has been in negotiation for over 5 years. Amendments have been added to gain more support for this bill, such as adding grant programs to organizations moving away from 14c, and including more representatives from 14c certificate holders on the task force. A vote has not been called for in the Senate, but may be in the fall.

Other items of interest :

A bill was passed that requires the Illinois Community College Board to submit recommendations for a model program of study for credit to train DSPs.

The Division of Developmental Disabilities plans to re-vamp their short-term and long-term stabilization homes that address needs of individuals with significant behaviors. The idea is to return them to the community instead of institutions.

Rep. Charlie Meier from southern Illinois continues to be a strong advocate for our loved ones with severe disabilities.

Lieutenant Governor of Illinois (second highest executive after Governor Pritzker), Juliana Stratton, along with other legislators, visited Murray Development Center. We need more legislators to meet our loved ones so they can understand the critical need for services.

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