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Missouri continues to deny any new admissions to state run ICFs/IID (called habilitation centers in Missouri). This policy has been in effect since 2008.

There are families across the state waiting for residential placement but are not allowed to have the choice of a state run ICF/IID. Families do call habilitation centers for assistance with placement, but have to be directed to our Regional Office that only places persons in the community. Our Department of Mental Health (DMH) is under federal guidelines to place persons in homes of three to four persons.

DMH continues to implement the new final rule from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). This CMS ruling on community living has some private providers considering all options.

Since 2010 the Nevada and Northwest habilitation centers have been closed. The Marshall center is in the process of merging with the Higginsville center. The 5 remaining habilitation centers are Bellefontaine, South County, St. Charles, Higginsville, and Southeast Missouri Residential Services/Poplar Bluff/Sikeston.

The Bellefontaine Habilitation Center has been extensively remodeled in the last few years. Four new state of the art homes of 8 bedrooms each opened in 2012. Residents have their own private bedrooms. These homes are for the most severely disabled. All other homes on the campus have been renovated. Many older buildings have been demolished. It is such a waste not to allow other families to have this choice.

There are proposed changes to Missouri's guardianship law compiled by the Missouri Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders, or MO-WINGS (www.mo-wings.org). MO-WINGS started meeting in 2012 to review and recommend changes to the 100-page guardianship law.

The MO-WINGS task force used the National Guardianship Summit Standards and Recommendations as a guideline to Missouri revisions. **Supported decision making** as an option or as a replacement of guardianship is part of these recommendations. www.naela.org/NGN

Missouri House Bill 2778, the proposed guardianship law revision, was introduced in the 2016 MO legislative session. It did not go anywhere, but it will be back next year.
www.house.mo.gov/billsummary.aspx?bill=HB2778

Some of the changes are reasonable. However, there are concerns:

1: the new wording (page 75, line 40-41) that states:

(3) "The guardian shall give priority to home or community-based settings when not inconsistent with the ward's goals and preferences;"

COMMENT: The guardian should not be limited in this way. The needs of the wards must be the priority in making decisions concerning their welfare. This wording should be deleted.

2: the repeated necessity of including the ward that has been determined by the courts to be "incapacitated" in the decision making process

COMMENT: If one has been declared by the courts as incapacitated how can that person participate in decision making? If one is indeed capable of decision making then maybe a guardianship is not needed. It would be better to keep the old wording of "in the best interest of the ward".

St. Louis County Public Administrator Tom Arras said the whole idea is to protect a person who is not capable of making his or her own decisions. He's concerned that proposals to update the guardianship law could pit the ward and guardian against each other.

"Reforms are going to make it harder for guardians to perform their function," he said.