

For Immediate Release
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For More Information
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National Disability Advocate to Present on Rights of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities and their Families

ARVADA – Julie Huso, a national advocate for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, will give a free presentation on the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families at the Jefferson County Public Library at 7525 W. 57th Avenue in Arvada, Colorado at 5:30 pm on Wednesday, September 10, 2014. The public is welcome to attend.



Huso has served as the Executive Director of VOR, a national nonprofit advocacy organization for high quality care and human rights for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, for over five years. She has been involved in disability advocacy for more than 25 years.

Save our Regional Centers, a coalition of concerned families and advocates and an affiliate of VOR, is hosting the presentation. Wheat Ridge, Pueblo, and Grand Junction Regional Centers are state-operated licensed facility homes to about 250 of Colorado's most profound disabled citizens.

A new law creates a Task Force to study and review the operations of the three centers and will consider whether any should be closed. Families of regional center residents are concerned about future closings, a trend facing other states.

"To families, the threat of closure is obvious," said Ellen Laurence, who heads up the Save our Regional Centers coalition, is a member of the Task Force, and also serves as VOR's Colorado State Coordinator. "Although the State has not decided whether or not to close our family members' homes, they are studying the issue."

Huso, whose organization has helped families and advocates in other states fight similar battles, will offer an overview of some federal laws that offer individual and families certain rights.

"There is no silver bullet to stop closings," said Huso. "I would be doing families a disservice if I promised success. However, what I can tell them is that States cannot, legally or morally, stop providing necessary services to eligible citizens such as Regional Center residents.

If you go

Who: Julie Huso, Executive Director of VOR, a national nonprofit advocating for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

What: Rights of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and their families.

Where: Arvada Public Library, 7525 W 57th Ave., Arvada, CO 80002

When: 5:30 pm, Wednesday, September 10, 2014.

Cost: Free

Federal law clearly recognizes the right to individual and family choice according to need. There are rights and powerful advocacy tools that families have in their arsenal.”

Proponents of closure argue that people with developmental disabilities are better served in small settings. VOR’s members see things differently.

“My daughter has been served in the so-called community,” said Laurence, whose 31 year old daughter has been a resident of Wheat Ridge Regional Center since she was 13. “She has very dangerous behaviors and significant health challenges. It took assaults on teachers and her family before professionals recognized she needed more specialized care. She’s had 31 surgeries. She’s not alone in the intensity of her needs due to her disabilities. Regional Centers provide unique and highly specialized care for Colorado’s profoundly disabled residents.”

Huso praises Regional Center families for their proactive advocacy.

“Families are the most effective voice for their disabled loved ones,” Huso said. “They know best. It is critical that families be on the frontlines educating legislators and state officials about the unparalleled, comprehensive and highly specialized care provided at Regional Centers. They are a true community of residents and caring people.”

About VOR: VOR is a national organization that advocates for high quality care and human rights for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Standing up for long-term care facilities and community disability programs, VOR is dedicated to maintaining individual family choice for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For more information about VOR, including information about our programs and a press kit, please visit <http://vor.net/about-vor>.

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