



Georgia State Report

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Georgia continues to transition individuals from qualified ICFs into community group homes that are unqualified to care for our loved ones.

At present, there are approximately 150 medically and mentally fragile individuals remaining at East Central Regional Hospital, formerly known as Gracewood State School. They are being cared for by highly competent doctors, nurses and health service staff. At no time is there a shortage of health care professionals caring for those at Gracewood.

This is not the case with employees of group homes, many of whom are woefully untrained and unqualified to care for those needing specific care and treatment.

In 2016 and 2018 independent investigator Elizabeth Jones and newspaper reporter Tom Corwin wrote reports detailing the tragic deaths of more than 500 individuals who were moved from ICFs to community settings.

Several of Gracewood's individuals have been relocated from their usual settings to new surroundings due to their dwindling population.

We have also been informed that once someone is sent into the community they cannot return to Gracewood. The only exception is if they return to Gracewood's dental clinic.

The clinic treats former residents as well as I/DD patients who have always resided in the community.

We have also found that an individual's monetary funds do not necessarily follow him or her to community placement.

In February of this year, eight members of our Family Council and eight members of the Augusta Interfaith Coalition visited the state capital having made appointments to meet with Governor Nathan Deal and I/DD Commissioner Judy Fitzgerald. Regretfully, neither was available upon our arrival.

However, State Senator Jesse Stone yielded his time to speak to the Senate and allowed a representative of the Family Council to address the Senate regarding the impending closure of Gracewood.

Since our loved ones are unable to make decisions for themselves, the decision to have choice of where our family members reside must be decided by those of us who are their guardians and representatives. Our family members must be afforded the structured setting needed for them to receive appropriate medical care and supervision.