

GROW Position Paper on Residential Development

Over the past several years there has been a serious lack of new development of residential supports for people with developmental disabilities. During this same period the waiting list for these supports has increased to more than 600 individuals living at home in Westchester County alone. Adequate and appropriate development that addresses the current discriminatory practices must become a priority.

We were therefore optimistic when the State Legislature mandated that OPWDD survey the residential needs of persons with developmental disabilities. We were also optimistic when a Transformation Panel was convened to hear of the needs of persons with developmental disabilities.

Unfortunately, the survey was vastly underreported. Younger people who were not on NY State CARES list were not surveyed. Many persons on the list were not surveyed.

While the majority of the testimonies given to The Transformation Panel centered on the residential needs of persons still living at home, little new development money was allocated and vague recommendations were made (a five-year plan without goals).

Accordingly, at present, there are still several major roadblocks for any individual who is looking for community based residential supports. For those people who need 24-hour support and supervision but do not live in a developmental center or a residential school, there is NO new development. In other words, they must wait for someone who is living in such a residence to die before they will be considered as a 'backfill' for that opening. And many times that vacancy is inappropriate.

For the group of individuals who have similar needs but live in a developmental center or are aging out of a residential school, OPWDD is developing - and even building - new residential opportunities; this appears to be highly discriminatory.

Even though over 60% of the people responding wanted traditional certified residences, self-direction continues to be OPWDD's answer to this crisis in residential opportunities. It is EXTREMELY difficult to bring this about. Only 78 residential placements using self-direction have occurred since 2013! In addition, these new residential supports for people living at home are for individuals who can manage safely with less than 24-hour supervision. Only 2 of the 78 were for people with more intensive needs. Again, this discriminates against those who are most in need.

We understand that providing less care and supervision in uncertified settings will cost less and is appropriate for some individuals; however, this model is not appropriate for many people in the OPWDD system.

The current process to place individuals in certified settings (CRO) requires agencies with vacancies to review all Priority 1 individuals first, many of whom are inappropriate for the particular home that has a vacancy. Only then can the agency review Priority 2 level individuals and so on. The process is very timely and inefficient. In addition, there is no parent representation on the CRO Panel.

We believe that a continuum of community based residential settings is essential to meet the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities; those needs range from intellectual and physical limitations to communication disorders and sensory impairments to behavioral and other mental health challenges.

GROW is committed to advocating for the appropriate level of services and supports for every individual.

It is essential that more funding be allocated so that any person with a developmental disability gets the residential opportunity that most appropriately addresses their needs whether they come from a residential school, a developmental center or come from HOME.

Furthermore, it is essential that parent/guardians be part of the processes being devised and implemented.