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Share Your Views Regarding the Closure of Developmental Centers in New Jersey *A Guide for Family Advocates*

There is no better way to lend your support for the closure of developmental centers than by personally reaching out to key decision makers, the media, and the public to express your views and spread the word on why maintaining New Jersey's segregated, costly, and outdated institutional system is the wrong choice for residents with developmental disabilities.

A personal phone call, email or letter to state and federal legislators, and letters to news and opinion editors should tell your story, in a way that helps leaders and the public understand that

- inclusion and community living is important to your family;
- people with disabilities should not be isolated and segregated

Below is a list of suggestions for how to lay out your views and share your story

- 1. Give a *short* description of your family and your loved one with a developmental disability.**
 - You can give your name/age, the name/age of your family members, etc.
 - You can describe the type of disability your family member has, and the types of supports you and your loved one rely on.
- 2. Express your hopes and goals for your loved one, as well as the concerns you have for their well-being.**
 - "My vision for my son / brother / daughter / sister is that they will _____."
 - "I will not be able to be my son / daughter's / sibling's caregiver indefinitely. I worry about _____."
- 3. If applicable, explain the amount of time that you and your loved one have been waiting for appropriate housing and support services in the community.**
 - "We have been waiting _____ years for resources, so my son / daughter / etc. can have a place to live and people to assist him / her."
- 4. Let whomever you are speaking with know that keeping open seven developmental centers in New Jersey significantly diminishes our ability to provide adequate and accessible housing and support options in the community.**
 - "We are now leaving too many people without the services and supports they need."
 - "We need a system that uses public funds in a way that helps more people - whether they are living in the institutions or in the community."
 - "We need to support the thousands of families providing care for a loved one with developmental disabilities at home."
 - "I believe that [at least some, or all seven of our] institutions should close."