

## **Position Statement on Deinstitutionalization**

The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities endorses the policy that, with proper supports, individuals with developmental disabilities, may be/could be capable of self-determination, independence, productivity and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life. It is imperative that future administrations be prevented from separating out those, who by the nature of their disabilities, may never demonstrate the aforementioned capabilities, with the purpose of re-institutionalizing them. The Council supports the declaration that:

### **Position**

“People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) have a legal right to live in the community and to receive necessary services and supports. Life in the community provides opportunities for dignity, freedom, choice, and a sense of belonging that are not possible in an institutional environment.<sup>1</sup>”

“The State must provide all individuals living in institutions the choice of receiving the services and supports they need in the community. No one should be forced to live in an institution to receive critical services. DDD should continue its current practice of diverting admissions of individuals from developmental centers. Current residents of institutions who choose to remain, must continue to receive the services and supports that they require. Sufficient community-based services must be available so that institutional services will no longer be necessary.”

### **Background Information**

“These truths are at the core of both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Olmstead decision. The courts have consistently upheld a person’s right to receive services in the least restrictive (most integrated) environment possible. Closing institutions is not about “dumping” people into the community, nor is it about closing large institutions and moving people to smaller institutions or institution-like settings. Closing institutions is about developing strong and inclusive community supports and allowing people to have control over how they live their lives.”

New Jersey continues to house individuals with I/DD in five large State-operated institutions (developmental centers). New Jersey spends 28% of its I/DD services budget on institutional care for a population that includes fewer than 5% of the individuals eligible for DDD services.<sup>2</sup> The cost of maintaining these institutions is often substantially higher than the cost to house individuals in the community. As the number of persons living in the institutions continues to decline, the cost per resident continues to increase. This limits the funding available to provide services and supports to individuals living in their communities. The State must shift needed resources to people living in their communities by formulating a plan to close and consolidate the remaining institutions as the number of the residents continues to decline.

Adopted: February 13, 2019

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<sup>1</sup> National Council on Disabilities website, 2018

<sup>2</sup> “The State of the States in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities” 11<sup>th</sup> Edition 2017