

My name is Anna Wolinski and I am a standby guardian for my cousin at Southbury Training School.

Recommendation 1: Southbury Training School should remain open because it is a home to people with mentally disabilities.

My cousin has been at Southbury Training School for 50 years. This is her home. When she was ten years old the state stepped in and told my grandparents that they could not take care of her anymore. Now the state wants us to put her in a group home. The staff and fellow clients of Southbury Training School have become her family. The group homes that our family have visited have not been welcoming and my cousin would not have the same support that she current gets from Southbury Training School. At Southbury, she is on a campus that is not only beautiful but safe and comforting. The staff that works with the clients at Southbury Training School are well trained to handle the special needs clients and they truly care about her and the other clients.

I could not imagine my cousin any place where she could have the same home family oriented environment while having the help and support she needs.

Recommendation 2: Southbury Training School should not only stay open but should open admissions because it is a place that is able to handle the stresses of a mentally challenged individual.

There are families that would love the peace of mind that comes with placing their special need child in a place like Southbury Training School. My cousin needs one on one supervision as her medication must be taken multiple times a day at the same time every day and at Southbury she has that. I have seen clients that are at group home wondering the street without supervision, which made me worry about what would happen if my cousin as at a facility like that. I never worry about that happening at Southbury Training School because of how well trained and professional the staff is.

I know a family that has a special needs child that was kept at home. This child was put through the school system because of new laws, which is unfair for the child, family, and school. The mother of this child passed away and the father stilled needed to work so the child ended up in a nursing home. This nursing home keeps him heavily medicated so he will stay quiet and they are not trained to handle people like him. Southbury Training School would be a better place for a special needs person because the staff knows how to handle people with his disabilities. With a beautiful campus just sitting there why not open it to new admissions? There are a lot of families with special need children and have nowhere to turn. A special needs child is a 24/7 undertaking that the typically family cannot handle on their own. This could even be beneficial to a family with a member who has been in accidents leading to permeant brain damage. Working with hospitals to place these individuals into a campus that is able to handle the new stresses of the family would be able to lift a weight off of the family's shoulders.

Recommendation 3: Campuses like Southbury can help reduce violence done by mentally ill individuals, so there should be more places capable to care for the mentally ill.

Mass shootings seem to be a regularly recurring event in America. Politicians everywhere claim that guns are not the issue but the mentally ill people with guns are the main issue. They say we need to help mentally ill people. Some of these people do harm to their loved ones, other people, and themselves. Having more places like Southbury will give families the ability to get help for the people the care for and can help society better understand the plight of having a mental illness.

Hopefully by keeping Southbury Training School open, opening admissions, and opening new campuses for other clients with special needs we as a society can better insure the safety of all citizens. Violence involving the mentally ill in some cases include families that just could not handle their loved ones any longer and feel like the system let them down. We owe it to them and all families with a mentally ill member to do our best to care for them as people and Southbury has that ability.

Southbury Training School and other schools like it give families a place to turn when they feel like they have no options. With the growing number of people with mental illnesses it is time that as a society we stepped up and made sure that we care for those who do not have the means or ability to care for themselves. Not only should Southbury stay open and admit more people, there should be more place like it so more families can be like mine and have peace of mind that their loved one is being cared for.

Thank You,

Anna Wolinski