

Date: December 31, 2015

To: Morna A. Murray, J.D.
Commissioner
Department of Developmental Services
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Hartford, Connecticut 06106
USA

From: Michael Fadus, J.D., M.B.A.
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Re: Southbury Training School (STS) Recommendations

Sent by e-mail: Kathryn.Rock-Burns@ct.gov

Copies: Governor Dannel P. Malloy
Marie Iadarola Fadus

Relationship to DDS

- My uncle, Richard Iadarola, has been a resident of STS for 60 years.
- His guardian, Maria Iadarola Fadus, is my mother.
- I have helped her and others like her over the years to protect their state rights as guardians.

My interest in this matter

Maintaining STS as a real option for guardians. In a war of attrition against elderly guardians and their elderly wards at STS, an arrayed host of ideological, governmental, and judicial bullies have foisted titanic legal, financial emotional, and human wreckage upon guardians, their families, and their wards *for decades*. This was done in the interest of "progress" and closing STS in favor of dubiously managed group homes dispersed far from the watchful eyes of the State, and without the stability, facilities, or safety afforded at STS.

Over the years, out-of-state group home operators and advocacy groups, many with the same people on their boards of directors, and often changing the names of their entities to give the appearance of widespread acceptance of a minority ideological viewpoint, have manipulated the pervasive anti-STS sentiment in the Office of Protection and Advocacy and the Department of Developmental Disabilities, and convinced legislators and those in the executive branch that only group homes are acceptable, and that STS should be shuttered forever.

These group home operators and advocacy groups achieve their goals by clogging the legal system, fighting Freedom of Information Act requests, laundering grant money by moving it from one entity to the next, and using their position of authorities to derisively dismiss the legitimate concerns of guardians. These so-called civil libertarians do this in the name of "rights" – while running slipshod over the rights of guardians. The private group home operators in particular, many who are part of a network of self-aggrandizing mercenaries preying on the timidity of elderly guardians, point to the expense of STS versus group homes, but unfairly compare residential settings with medical facilities with staff that has been there for years (such as STS) versus small homes in suburban neighborhoods with no on-premise medical facilities, high staff turnover, and no consistency in services or activities.

Maintaining a record of all facts about STS. The record must reflect, particularly for younger families with developmentally disabled wards, that those in government tasked with treating wards, their families, and the staff at STS fairly and objectively have, in fact, a skewed and discredited ideology about residential care, and regularly ignore the wishes of elderly guardians – running out the clock, so to speak, until their aim of closing STS has been accomplished.

Reminding the State of its financial investments in STS. The State of Connecticut has spent untold millions of dollars to upgrade STS as an intermediate care facility, receives federal funding for this, and there is plenty of space for those for whom STS is an ideal choice. The State has stopped admissions to STS, yet there are thousands of families on waiting lists in Connecticut needing care for family members with developmental disabilities. And yet DDS cannot figure out what to do with STS? Here are some obvious recommendations:

Recommendation #1: Reverse the prohibition on new admissions to STS. The choice of STS is currently not an option. Therefore, the current decision process for opting for a group home outside of STS is not a real choice, but a kabuki theater of foregone conclusions. This must change.

Recommendation #2: Leverage the millions spent on STS. From the *Messier* lawsuit and beyond, many facilities and residential buildings (group homes that already exist!) have been upgraded already and others could be. Once reopened, many of those who prefer the campus-like setting of STS for their wards, and the facilities and activities it provides them, would alleviate the strain on many of those families on waiting lists.

Recommendation #3: Open STS to respite care. Families who care for loved ones at home need a break. STS could provide temporary care for wards in structured, safe environments while the families can regroup.

Recommendation #4: Create a nursing home for the developmentally disabled at STS. Much like campuses for the elderly, with step-down facilities from full independence, to assisted living, to nursing home facilities, STS could be designed for a similar campus for the developmentally disabled.

Recommendation #5: Create job opportunities for the developmentally disabled at STS. One of the nicest memories I have of STS from over 30 years ago was going to the little café on campus and having a hot dog, French fries, and a soda served by residents of STS. There they were carefully supervised and had understanding clientele. In addition to opening a restaurant, STS could also open a bed & breakfast or small hotel where families vacationing with their wards (or perhaps even the understanding among the general population) could stop and be in a safe, supportive environment in this beautiful part of the state.

Recommendation #6: Make STS an example of a top-rate facility nationwide. The history of STS has had its problems, some self-inflicted by administrations that starved STS of funding and then complained about the lack of upkeep. However, in a time of finding solutions for those with developmental disabilities and managing the state's precarious finances, STS could be showcased as how the State of Connecticut can cleverly and efficiently build on its existing legacy, in a facility designated as an historic district in the National Register of Historic Places, that has been home to so many for so long.