

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been employed as the Social Worker at Boyd's Kinsman Home for the past 20 years. I have also worked as a Job Coach with the Coleman Professional Services in the past. My job responsibilities through Coleman required me to go on site with an individual who had developmental disabilities and to coach them through having a job in the public. I also have worked as a Therapeutic Program Worker at the Youngstown Developmental Center.

Over the years, I have worked with a wide range of individuals with developmental disabilities. Some were higher functioning than others, but I have never come across an individual who did not benefit in some manner from their residential placement. Each individual has had their own capabilities but at the same time, had a developmental disability which made it difficult for them to manage at the same capacity as an individual without this disability.

The residents of Boyd's Kinsman Home are given every opportunity to utilize their own skills and capabilities at home and at work. I have interviewed these residents a multitude of times over the years and I am reassured by them on a consistent basis that they like their "home" and they do not have a desire to reside anywhere else. The key term here is their "home". Boyd's is not a placement to these individuals, it is not an institution, it is their home. Many of the individuals do not have any surviving family members and this home gives them a sense of belonging and family. They view the staff, their peers, and the staff that work with them at the workshop as their family. These individuals are given more opportunities for recreational activities and trips than I have. If they did not have their home, many would be isolated and never have the chance to socialize and travel.

There are conflicts that occur as there is in any "family" setting due to different opinions or beliefs. I frequently meet with individuals to discuss their issues and concerns. Many potentially volatile situations are diffused through these conversations. If these individuals were residing independently, they would not have the opportunity to have access to services as readily to diffuse problems and resolve issues. Boyd's provides the residents the ability to have access to staff, including nurses, around the clock. These individuals do not always have the best coping mechanisms to deal with daily issues or problems. Isolation would create many more issues. Moving these individuals from their "home" would cause more isolation and feelings of loneliness. These individuals have friendships established with their peers and the staff. They have a sense of belonging.

The workshop they attend evaluates their abilities and adjusts job responsibilities to their individual abilities. This is not true in the public sector. If a person cannot perform their job responsibilities they lose the job. These individuals do not lose their job at their workshop if they cannot perform their duties; their job is changed to accommodate them. That is the benefit of a workshop setting.

As mentioned earlier, I worked as a job coach with an individual who had developmental disabilities. I was responsible for motivating him to complete his job tasks. He was assigned as a dishwasher at a small restaurant. I worked along side him for several weeks to help him learn his job and his responsibilities. He had a difficult time keeping up with the job and getting the dishes washed. Most of the time, I had to wash them with him or he would have never been able

to get out of work in the time allotted. Due to the program being funded by state and federal funds, he was only allowed so many hours of assistance from a job coach. When the hours were used, he was left on his own. Within two weeks of him no longer having a job coach, he lost his job. Unfortunately, his landlord did not care that he was no longer employed, the rent still was due.

These are just a few examples of the daily problems an individual with a developmental disability is faced with. The security of a workshop and a structured living setting provides them with stability and reduces the stress in their lives.

After having worked in the field for so many years, I am very proud of the care and the sense of family these individuals receive at Boyd's Home. I would hope that if I ever had a family member with a developmental disability that they would be fortunate enough to be able to call Boyd's Kinsman Home their "home".

Sincerely,

Jim Stinedurf, LSW