

3-6-15

Kristina Becker, Administrator

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Kristina,

I appreciate your request to share testimony on March 19 with the HHS Subcommittee regarding ICF's, Adult Day Service Programs and the significant role they play in the provision of supports and opportunities to Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities.

As you know, my background includes 22 years of experience as a QIDP, a Program Specialist responsible for coordinating medical and programmatic services in licensed group homes and waiver settings and more recently as an Adult Day Services Director. I consider myself a strong advocate for the rights and choices of the Individuals I have served and speak from the heart regarding my experience and observations.

In addition to availing myself to any questions the committee may have, I feel I can share critical first hand experiences that will provide the committee with realistic examples of the benefits both programs at issue ensure.

If given the opportunity, I will share experiences on the following topics: Intensive behavioral supports; critical medical needs; supervision supports; consistent long term training strategies to name a few. I provide first hand testimony on my experiences regarding the challenges that are presented in small waiver settings and how the quality of lives of Individuals with smaller funding ranges declines when changes occur in the lives of their roommates and how their services are directly impacted.

I have been fortunate to play a role and stand witness to some success stories of Individuals who have followed the course of downsizing to "lesser restrictive settings." As a Program Specialist I shared in the lives of Individuals who benefited from smaller waiver settings and lived happily with their friends and participated in a variety of employment opportunities. In those particular cases the living and working arrangements were appropriate to meet their needs. Unfortunately, I have also shared too many experiences in which I feel the system failed Individuals who would have benefited for greater levels of support or were placed in settings with inadequate supports for their intensive needs. I worked diligently to advocate for the services the Individual required to be healthy and safe and yet sometimes failed due to the limitations of the waiver services.

In addition to the concerns I share above, more recently as a direct result of my change in role to Adult Day Service Director, I strongly encourage the committee to consider the intensive needs required to support Individuals in employment settings. As a result of the cognitive limitations coupled in some cases with dual diagnosis concerns, a significant number of the Individuals currently attending the Adult Day Service program we have created require constant supports with regards to supervision, crisis intervention, health and safety, adult daily living skills in addition to having extremely limited attention spans and therefore interests.

Our program offers an opportunity for Individuals to be stimulated in a variety of means including socialization, leisure time activities, community integration in-house and abroad, in addition to learning an awareness and education of what employment actually is. It is fair to say the services provided to maintain the health and safety of the Individuals throughout the day requires on-going, hands on supports. As a result, those needs are prioritized over vocational activities and would unlikely change if the Individuals pursued community employment. The Adult Day Service program offers Individuals a variety of opportunities, but in many cases for Individuals whose needs are so intense they interfere in vocational activities, the chance to participate vocational tasks, even if for very limited periods of time, and yet reap the benefit monetarily for their completion and success.

It is my hope to share specifically my experiences with the committee and provide additional insight to their thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Jessica R. Schiavone