

Paul George (age 43), living in an ICF on Hill St., Urbana, run by Champaign County Residential Services (CRSI) in Urbana, has been locked down since April 2020. (He suffers from cerebral palsy.) We, his parents, are titled "visitors," and that means we get half-hour visits four times a week, usually in a small room. If the weather is nice, I can walk Paul with a staff member for a short distance. He is not allowed to go for a ride with me.

The lockdown is weakening Paul. His legs are weak and he can barely walk, for lack of exercise. I could take him to a park for a walk where there are benches, but that is denied. Some physical therapy would also help.

His posture is poor. He leans to the right both sitting and walking, and his head rests against his shoulder in an armchair. The staff are aware of this and may bring out a cushion for support, but Paul tosses this aside. What's needed is an upright chair with straps.

Paul speaks little when in the small room, but oftener when he is outside, and he says more and more clearly. We think he does not understand why his weekly visits home or his daily outings with me have ended. If I were to take him out, he would be subjected to a two-week quarantine penalty at our house. Yet I have promised only to go to parks and to carry disinfectant with me for toileting. Also, we never go to his care home without a temperature check, and I am prepared to get our doctor's clearance before a ride with Paul.

The odd thing is that the staff socialize when off-duty and handle Paul all the time. Yet we are not allowed to touch him, play with him, or show him affection and love. For over 40 years we did these things and now we cannot, leaving Paul lethargic, sleepy and unresponsive. Also, the staff reports that his small seizures have increased.

We are glad to know that the present staff is doing its best. We want them to agree that Paul should resume his afternoon walks with me, his father. These are always part of his daily outings.

The existing rules (which can change daily) are unfair. We do not pose any more of a risk to the ICF's residents than the staff do. They have touching and handling privileges and we do not unless we are with Paul at the dentist's or doctor's office.

CRSI and the staff need to know that we are "essential caregivers" and can help Paul come back to a happy life by doing what we have always done for him. If this is not changed, we will lose our son, not to the virus but to inactivity,

Once again, we respect the staffers at Hill St. and all that they do daily for our handicapped son.

Respectfully,

David & Rita George