

VOR Response to *New York Times* Request for “Most Neglected Topic” in the Media

The Impact of Forced Deinstitutionalization on People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

“People with intellectual disabilities (ID), a diagnosable mental disorder formerly called “mental retardation,” and their care needs, are particularly neglected by the media. What coverage there is typically focuses on success stories, but neglects the underbelly of this story: The fate of thousands of individuals with profound ID, many of whom have additional physical, medical and/or behavioral disabilities, who are forcibly removed from specialized care (“deinstitutionalization”). The actions that cause this removal, often federal funded and instituted by groups like Protection & Advocacy and the U.S. Department of Justice, result in needless suffering from abuse, neglect, isolation and death because the necessary level of specialized care and trained staff are simply not available in most community settings. Tragedies due to forced deinstitutionalization, in a dangerous quest for “normalization,” need far wider coverage. So does the collateral damage felt by individuals who seek community living but end up waiting years, even decades, living with aging parents who can no longer adequately care for them, while advocacy and funding focus on moving high needs individuals from congregate facilities. As you reported, failing to provide people with mental illness adequate care results in homelessness, incarceration, or worse. Some people with ID face not homelessness and prison, but instead are suffering and dying in what are supposed to be caring settings.” – Tamie Hopp, VOR Director of Government Relations & Advocacy www.vor.net

Reminder: [VOR](http://www.vor.net), the national organization that advocates for choice in care and services for I/DD individuals, including the right to choose among residential options including facility-based options such as STS, is offering free electronic subscriptions to its publications until June 1, 2015. This is a special opportunity for non-members of this national advocacy group to learn more about issues affecting the care and rights of I/DD individuals.

To sign up, e-mail Julie Huso: jhuso@vor.net and reference “Complimentary Subscription” in the subject line. Include your name, address and your e-mail address. (Your information is protected under VOR’s privacy policy.)