

Statewide Coalition for Expanded Residential Options

Increasing Choices for True Community Inclusion

PO Box 475 Tangerine, Florida 32777

June 24, 2009

Purpose:

To advocate on behalf of persons with developmental disabilities and their families to secure the right to choose from a diversified spectrum of options for housing and lifestyles.

Advocate for the civil rights of persons with developmental disabilities to be supported in the housing option of their choice.

Vision:

To support the establishment of long-term, community based residential options, outside of the current group home model, that provides a safe, meaningful life with dignity, opportunity and community inclusion for all people.

To provide educational, interactive, networking opportunities for accessing information and sharing emerging ideas with individuals or groups involved in the establishment of community based residential options.

Submission to FDDC Work Group #1 – Embracing the Problem

Beliefs:

- Persons with developmental disabilities have the same rights as every other citizen of the United States. Therefore we should recognize their right to the same housing/living options granted to other special groups, such as senior communities.
- We believe that people with developmental disabilities have a need equal to that of any other citizen to feel accepted within their community, valued for their uniqueness and contributions, and able to participate in interactions, activities, and mutually supportive relationships with a variety of people in a variety of environments.

- We believe that persons with developmental disabilities should have both “freedom to” as well as “freedom from”. This means freedom to make individual choices and as well as freedom from poverty, abuse, isolation, and unsafe environments. All too often these “freedoms” are not appropriately in place. We believe this needs to be addressed.
- The original intent of expanding residential options to include planned communities has been a direct response from families and self-advocates who believe the current options are terribly inadequate and do not provide substantive safety measure, optimal lifestyle choices and living arrangements.
- Placing a group home in a ‘community’ setting, with forced separation between other group homes, does not automatically establish a group home as part of an authentic community. It often has the reverse effect by making them even more isolated, self-contained and vulnerable. Isolation also contributes to the lack of oversight which places the individual at risk for abuse.
- All concerned parties must work together to move beyond the current restrictive interpretation of Florida statutes which attempt to insure ‘community inclusion’ but in reality fall far short of that important objective. In addition service delivery models must also reflect person-centered philosophies which support lifestyle choices, including therapies, recreational activities, and other personal options of daily living. The current group home model is neither inclusive nor individualized.
- Families of person with developmental disabilities seek to be part of the solution to a complex problem. We offer a unique passion and perspective and aim to creatively partner with state agencies in providing exceptional outcomes for our family members with developmental challenges.
- Everyone should have the freedom to choose a place to live in safety and without discrimination. The idea that an agency or government might make the decision, or limit the choice for an individual with disabilities seems grossly unfair at best, and unconstitutional at worst.

Respectfully submitted by:

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