

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Dawn Roberson](#)
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Wednesday, May 28, 2014 4:58:14 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Wednesday, May 28, 2014 4:43 PM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Wednesday, May 28, 2014 - 16:43

Agency: DEPARTMENT AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES DADS

First Name: Dianne

Last Name: Johnson

Title: Guardian/Cousin

Organization you are affiliated with: Denton State Supported Living Center

City: Burleson

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed:

I am writing with regard to my cousin/ward, Mary Ellen, who is severely mentally handicapped and is a resident of the Denton State Supported Living Center (DSSLC) (formerly the Denton State School). Mary Ellen, now 57, suffered brain damage upon birth. Although she has some sight in one eye, she is legally blind. Mary Ellen will always require the care that she now receives at the DSSLC. As she has a history of seizures, the 24-hour-a-day availability of a medical staff is certainly necessary. Due to being hit by a truck in front of her home when she was young, she has an uncontrollable fear of the sound of a motor. If she is near the sounds of traffic, she has a panic attack. The campus is quiet and the speed limit through the campus is 15 mph, so she can walk around the campus safely by herself. She walks to her job on campus, to other dorms where she has friends, to the offices where staff greet her each morning with a cup of coffee, and to the gymnasium in the evenings where she participates in planned activities. Each Friday night, the residents attend a dance in the gym on campus. I doubt she could roam about alone in a neighborhood if she lived in a home in the community the way that she does at the DSSLC.

Following are some comments in favor of SSLC living rather than community living.

- Medical attention

The residents of the SSLCs receive personalized medical attention onsite from doctors and nurses at the infirmary and in their dorms. They go to specialists off campus when necessary. A hospital is a mile away from the DSSLC.

- Living closer in proximity to their families

In the community, they may be closer to where their families live, but that doesn't ensure that their family will visit them or that the residents will get to visit their family. Mary Ellen is an hour away from her family and we see her once a month.

- Living independently

They are more isolated and restricted in the community. In the community, the residents can't go in their front yard or anywhere by themselves because someone would harm them or they would hurt themselves. There is more of a chance for the residents in the community to be neglected because there is less oversight over the employees because there are less employees. A lot of neighborhoods oppose group homes in their neighborhood because some of the people living in the group homes are not only mentally handicapped, they are mentally ill and could be dangerous. The bottom line is that the mentally handicapped will never be accepted by the general public and are at the very least ignored.

- Saving the State Money

A group home that has at least 4 bedrooms is going to cost at least \$125,000.

Then, you have to pay for the staff members to be there 24/7, a vehicle for transportation, etc. You can't buy in large bulk quantities as you would at a SSLC which is more cost-effective. Some of the people and organizations (such as ARC and Advocacy, Inc.) who are against the SSLCs, actually own group homes, so naturally they are in favor of closing SSLCs. The cost for SSLCs is higher because they provide services for the residents. The number of residents in SSLCs is down because MHMR no longer informs parents or guardians that living at a SSLC is an option.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

The Denton SSLC has many dedicated employees who have served Mary Ellen and our family well for the past 39 years. We are very appreciative of the excellent care that has been provided and the safe, secure, and happy environment in which she lives.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree