

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Dawn Roberson](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 04, 2014 7:55:01 AM

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

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]  
Sent: Tuesday, June 03, 2014 10:35 PM  
To: Sunset Advisory Commission  
Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Tuesday, June 3, 2014 - 22:35

Agency: DEPARTMENT AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES DADS

First Name: Leslie

Last Name: Wizner

Title: Gaurdian / Mother

Organization you are affiliated with:

City: Santa Fe

State: New Mexico

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

June 3, 2014

To the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission,

I was a young mother pregnant with my first child at 19 and discovered a few months after marriage that my husband was violent. My daughter was born prematurely after I had been thrown down a flight of stairs. During my labor he was consuming cocaine in the hospital room while I was receiving medication to try and stop the delivery. Gratefully, he is no longer a part of our lives after many years.

Laura was diagnosed early with mental disabilities and delays. She attended tutoring from the age of 2 and continued to be in special education classes during the summer as well as the academic year. By the age of 5, she was exhibiting "danger to self" activities. I was determined to keep her with my son and I.

Her behavior at school and at home escalated. I worked full time and attended school part time, as child support was randomly received. By the time Laura was 8, my sister in law had a serious discussion with me, which by the end of, gave me the clarity to find a place for Laura to live with consistency and a home environment that 24-hour care could provide.

I had Laura placed in an ICF-MR and struggled through the transition. It was very difficult due to her having to be in Abilene TX., while my son and I remained in El Paso. She was devastated and with every visit held to me begging me not to leave. At about 6 months of her being there I made an unannounced visit to discover her in very bad health. An infection on her foot from a splinter that had been buried deep in her heel, a massive yeast infection which left her vaginal and rectal area bleeding, and a loss of weight to where my son did not recognize her. This was reported and attended to by the next day, however, my trust in this home was shattered.

I went home reluctantly, due to being in nursing school and the reassurance of the QMRP that the issues would be resolved immediately. Within weeks I received a phone call advising me that one of the employees that worked with Laura was being charged with physical abuse towards Laura, locking her in a closet for up to 6 hours, hitting her entire body with a wooden spoon and allegations from other staff regarding forced sexual acts. The employee was fired and later found guilty of all charges except the sexual acts due to both staff unwilling to testify. At the time of this report I was able to get Laura moved back to El Paso into an ICF-MR. The change was difficult for her, but I was able to be with her on the weekends. During this time she was very unstable and had many difficulties in school as well as in her ICF-MR home.

She had many behaviors ranging from defecating in the classroom, kicking in windows at the dentist office, kicking in windows on the school bus. Police were called at several times to take her from school to her ICF-MR home due to the homes inability to pick her up from school. The inconsistency of her life was intolerable for her. Employees at the home were inconsistent and barely trained to attend to a child with her needs.

Had I not been a nurse, her recurrent urinary tract infections would never have been attended to, as the nursing care was scarce. Laura was sexually abused by a room-mate and physically abuse by a staff who left employment when confronted. Her behavior at the ICF-MR became so intolerable that they refused to let me take her back. The ICF-MR home refused to let her go back to her home, no discharge forms, no formal meeting, just a phone call from a staff member saying that they were unable to let her come back.

I was forced to admit her to the psychiatric ward of the hospital, and upon their discharge of her, the ICF-MR refused again to let her go back. After 3 admissions to the psychiatric ward, the last one due to her trying to stab her brother with scissors, which led to his attempt at suicide along with a 2 week stay at the psychiatric ward, the ICF-MR refused to readmit her to "her home". I was finally able to get a meeting with the powers that be, and at a court hearing was able to get her admitted to the state hospital.

My son was emotionally battered and I missed countless hours of work. Laura was treated like an animal, by the people who were supposed to be providing her stability and a home environment.

Through many phone calls and the help of one social worker I was able to find Austin State Center. Laura has gone from the deepest of sorrows to a happy, conversing, singing, playing, helpful, working, shopping, loving, caring, beautiful young woman.

She walks through the grounds of the center and will greet fellow friends by name, will engage in conversation with employees by name, from all over the vast center. She enjoys walking along the trail and seeing others dogs and cats, knows them by name. She recognizes the church and loves to let others know that she sings in the choir.

Laura is not defecating in her room, she is not having the police come to put her in handcuffs for bad behavior, she is not being scorned and taunted. Her behavior is reflective of the caring and love she receives by everyone at the state center. She recently had a disagreement with her roommate, which is resolved by changing roommates. I grew up with several sisters, we often had arguments and changed rooms! The Austin state center recognizes the need for consistency, love, discipline, and demonstrates a genuine professionalism in the care of the individuals who have made this their home.

When I dreamed of having a baby, it was not Laura. However, I stayed by her incubator for 3 long months. I stood by the 3 times she died and they brought her back to life. I waited until she was 2 1/2 months old before I could hold her next to me.

I took her home weighing 5 pounds, checking on her endlessly throughout the night to make sure she was breathing. I never dreamed of having to face the fact that I alone was incapable of taking care of her.

I wondered if she was just --- "being difficult", thinking, "she knows better", or "what is wrong with her?"- I couldn't make sense of it. I went to the people who said they could help and they referred me to ICF-MR. I trusted them. Please, tell me how am I to trust them with the well being of my daughter?

I did not ask to have a child with so many needs. I am so grateful that I finally have a chance to realize how much I need her. The love she gives is like no other. I believe the State center has provided a home for her to discover herself, and to discover a world that does not condemn and stare and ridicule. She is much more confident when out shopping or eating out at restaurants, or going to the dentist.

The family, the lifestyle and consistency that a State Center provides, is the answer and is Lauras home. When I visit, she tells me "I'm ready to go home now." There is no crying or clinging to me. She walks in the door greeted and giving a big smile. I have to remind her to give me a hug goodnight.

My last visit with her happened to coincide with a family reunion. When I took her home one evening she made an incredible statement, "I have two families!" she said with a huge smile on her face. Please don't take that smile away.

Sincerely,  
Leslie Wizner

Leslie Wizner

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: Keep Austin State Center Open!

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree