

**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 7:55:37 AM

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

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]  
Sent: Tuesday, June 03, 2014 8:21 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 - 20:21

Agency: DEPARTMENT AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES DADS

First Name: Kathy

Last Name: Hackett

Title: Volunteer

Organization you are affiliated with:

City: Austin

State: Texas

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

I oppose closing the state supported living centers, in particular the Austin facility. The facilities provide a needed service for individuals who are not ready or able to live in a community setting. Because the staff have known the residents for years, they recognize the beginnings of behaviors and are able to prevent them from escalating. Moving people from Austin SSLC is taking someone who learns slowly and lived one place for up to 50 years and asking them to make a transition to a new environment. This is not kind.

Before agreeing to close any facilities, please investigate:

- who is monitoring group homes for the same issues that crop up at living centers. If this is not studied, any problems that exist (and why wouldn't they) will surface later and be much harder and more expensive to fix.
- what percentage of individuals moved into group homes end up in jail (I have heard that people in the prison system are seeing a sharp increase of individuals with developmental disabilities). Housing people in jail is much more expensive than housing them at a living center.
- how many people who have been moved into group homes have died. I cannot tell you my source, but I know of at least two within the last two years who have moved from the Austin living center to their death.

This is not just about money, it is about people's life and welfare.  
thank you for your consideration.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

If the point is to move people out, put the group homes back under the control of DADS so the residents can be placed in the most appropriate setting for their needs.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Dawn Roberson](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)  
**Date:** Monday, June 23, 2014 8:07:32 AM

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

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]  
Sent: Saturday, June 21, 2014 11:56 AM  
To: Sunset Advisory Commission  
Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Saturday, June 21, 2014 - 11:56

Agency: DEPARTMENT AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES DADS

First Name: Kathy

Last Name: Hackett

Title: volunteer

Organization you are affiliated with:

City: Austin

State: Texas

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

Re: Sunset recommendation to close Austin and other State Supported Living Centers (SSLCs) A. Issue: Austin SSLC has a large problem retaining staff and incurs a large amount of overtime charges due to this. I believe this has several causes:

1. Every two years the employees face that the facility might close. This encourages people to look for other employment.
  2. People have to work a double shift if their replacement does not come in.
- Many of the direct care workers work two jobs and have families. Having to stay on for a second shift causes disruption in their lives.

Possible solutions:

1. Decide that the facility will indeed stay open indefinitely and part of the turn over problem will go away.
2. Have a pool of people who can work as substitutes like exists for substitute teachers and nurses. There are many former employees in Austin who might be available for this work.

B. Issue: DOJ has found that the living center is not providing the best care and training for the individuals in the facilities.

Possible solution/comment: Instead of closing facilities and moving individuals to community group homes, FIRST investigate what is happening in the group homes. There appears to be a lot of data on how things could be better at the living centers. Are things any better in group homes? Are we just moving the problem and in five years is DOJ going to be back suing the state for lack of care of individuals in group homes? Fixing problems in group homes would be much more difficult than fixing problems at facilities.

At living centers many people see each resident daily – nurses, recreation aides, day habilitation

workers, direct care staff. If there is a problem it is much more likely that someone will notice it than in a group home with the same 6-10 workers over the course of the week.

Before closing facilities and moving people, perhaps we could check to see if we are just moving the problem instead of solving it. I would like to see group homes come back under control of the state like they used to be. Then decisions could be made on the best place for each person, rather than fighting about it.

C. Issue: Group homes in the community are a more 'normal' way to live and it is better to mainstream people than keep them isolated in larger facilities.

Possible solution/comment: People at the Austin SSLC live in homes of 10-15 people. The campus is, in essence, composed of 20 or so 'group homes'.

They eat meals together, they watch TV together, they have outings and games in their home and on campus. They have developed friendships over many years. If they are able, they can safely walk around campus by themselves.

(How possible is that in most neighborhoods?) Each night different free activities are available to them in the recreation center on campus, including movies, art activities and dances. There is a chapel on campus with Sunday services and an award winning choir.

If one of these individuals lives in a house in an Austin neighborhood, getting to dances and participation in other activities requires transportation and planning on the part of the staff and there are not as many opportunities. I know of one person in a group home who finally was able to go to a dance after five months. The home did not have a driver on Friday nights, so they all stayed home. At least on a campus you can walk or ride in a golf cart.

D. Issue: The Austin facility is old and expensive to maintain.

Possible solution: As far as I understand it, the former Travis State School land is still available. While moving people across town is not optimal, it would then free up the Austin SSLC land. Or sell off part of the Austin land

– services could be consolidated. This would allow parents, many of whom are elderly, to still visit their children.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

New idea:

Issue: Some groups are strongly opposed to keeping living centers open.

Families of people who live there are strongly opposed to closing them.

Possible solution: Instead of a commission on which facilities to close, how about a commission to look at how the living centers and group homes could work together? Could group homes be invited to dances at the living center, for example?

I have listed the following ideas in the Comments box, but not sure what goes in what box, so am repeating here:

A. Have a pool of people who can work as substitutes like exists for substitute teachers and nurses. There are many former employees in Austin who might be available for this work.

B. FIRST investigate what is happening in the group homes. There appears to be a lot of data on how things could be better at the living centers. Are things any better in group homes? Are we just moving the problem and in five years is DOJ going to be back suing the state for lack of care of individuals in group homes? Fixing problems in group homes would be much more difficult than fixing problems at facilities.

C. No addition

D. As far as I understand it, the former Travis State School land is still available. While moving people across town is not optimal, it would then free up the Austin SSLC land. Or sell off part of the Austin land –

services could be consolidated. This would allow parents, many of whom are elderly, to still visit their children.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree