

March 10, 2011

Written Testimony for the House Appropriations Committee:

My name is Linda Misasi. I am the executive director of Creative Community Living (CCL). CCL is a non-profit service provider formed in 1996 by Sharon Bird and other parents of former Winfield State Hospital and Training Center residents. CCL began by serving 101 residents who were the last to leave WSH&TC. These residents were considered among the most medically fragile individuals in the state at the time of the closure. Today, fifteen years later, we are serving approximately 135 individuals in 25 residences in Winfield, Arkansas City and El Dorado. My message is straightforward - if closure of WSH&TC were possible, closure of KNI is possible. Community services are available to meet the needs of individuals residing at KNI. CCL is one of the agencies with a proven track record of serving individuals with high medical needs.

In August 2010, Sharon Bird and several other parents of individuals receiving services from CCL met with the parent group at KNI. Safety, loss of "home," continuity of services, oversight, turnover of staff, dental services, health care and adequate funding are some of the concerns parents of individuals leaving WSH&TC had, as do parents of KNI residents today. Each of those concerns must be addressed in order to insure successful community placements and ongoing success. Agencies supporting individuals with high needs leaving WSH&TC were able to access funding at a higher reimbursement rate than for those with less serious needs. Adequate funding to meet the needs of the individuals who leave KNI must be in place. Transition issues for individuals who made their home at WSH&TC for 40-50 years were not as difficult as anticipated. Satisfaction surveys of parents/guardians whose loved ones were at WSH&TC and who have received services from CCL for the last 15 years show greater satisfaction with community services than with the services received at WSH&TC. One must remember that this parent group fought closure of WSH&TC just as vehemently as the KNI parents are fighting it, but now those Winfield parents prefer community care.

Dental services were extremely difficult to access for those who left WSH&TC, so CCL opened its own dental clinic. Health care services have been found to meet the needs of the individuals within our local communities. Turnover of staff is higher at CCL than at the institutions. CCL developed a career ladder for staff and is able to maintain a contingent of senior staff while still battling turnover of entry level staff. We are able to provide quality services despite the turnover of entry level staff. Ten duplexes were built by CCL to provide accessible housing for the individuals leaving WSH&TC. Duplexes were preferred by parents because they would have other staff nearby and safety would be enhanced. CCL developed a quality assurance protocol providing oversight to the settings all hours of the day and night. On call nursing staff and administrative staff as well as supervisors are accessible to staff.

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Attachment 6

Parents/guardians comprise 60% of the board of directors at CCL and this also helps to provide oversight. Oversight of community service providers is provided by the Community Developmental Disability Organizations, and SRS Quality Management staff in the community. The CDDOs of Butler County and Cowley County provide oversight to our organization. Everything is not perfect in the community, but with the right planning and correct supports in place, everyone should have the opportunity to incur reasonable risk and live as independently as possible in their community.

Submitted by: Linda Misasi, executive director of Creative Community Living, Inc.

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