



# DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER

**The Arkansas Protection & Advocacy (P&A) System**

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***For Immediate Release:***

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## Press Release

**Little Rock, AR., May 20, 2010.** Disability Rights Center (DRC) and Arkansas Support Network (ASN) call on Governor Mike Beebe to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the pending closure of the Alexander Human Development Center (Alexander) to provide Arkansans with disabilities and their families with “a choice and more of a voice” in community placement options for Arkansans with developmental disabilities.

In light of the Department of Justice’s action against the State, we are concerned about the potential impact and particularly about comments in recent weeks that indicate a belief that some individuals cannot live in community settings. The collective professional experience of our staffs serving individuals living in the human development centers (pre and post discharge) and the success of several states that have moved to exclusively community-based services for their citizens would indicate otherwise. One of those states, West Virginia, has similar resources to those we have in Arkansas. Certainly, a state will have to develop strong community supports to serve all persons with disabilities in the community. Not only can it be done, it is usually done for far less cost and greater

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*"To passionately assist the lives of people with disabilities through education, empowerment and protection of their legal rights."*

satisfaction on the part of the persons being served. Even when family members were anxious at the outset, their experience with individualized community supports for their loved one led them to a transformation and belief that greater quality of life exists in the community. We see this as a matter of civil rights and one of fiscal responsibility.

On May 5, 2010, Claire Mahon, who is among the private consultants the Department of Human Services hired in March, at a cost of \$900,420 to run Alexander temporarily, reported to the Developmental Disabilities Services Board that the consulting team had identified 10 male residents of Alexander appropriate for community placement.

On May 20, 2010, that number had been increased by Ms. Mahon to “a large number” of residents at Alexander who could move into community programs, but “either the services they needed weren’t available or they had been rejected repeatedly.”

DRC and ASN call on the Governor to immediately begin individualized assessments of all the residents of Alexander to identify the appropriate and necessary supports and services mandated by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the United States Supreme Court decision in *Olmstead* so that each resident may receive services in the most integrated setting.

DRC and ASN strongly urge the Governor to shift the focus from “investing the money saved (by closing Alexander) into the five remaining human development centers” to investing the money saved to support more fully funding the existing home and community based waiver and other community based services.

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