

Steve Suroviec says "any service provided in an institution can also be accessed by a person living in a smaller structure (a home) located in a more visible and accessible area of the state (in a typical neighborhood).

My friend has lived at Polk Center since he was 17 years old and he just turned 84! He has the freedom to ride his bicycle up and down the halls from Northside to Southside. He rides up and down the center hallway and talks to the professional staff almost daily. He has the freedom to ride to the canteen and get his coffee and his favorite turkey sandwich or whatever snacks he feels like that day. Sometimes he sits inside the canteen and visits with friends, but he prefers to sit in the hallway at his very own table and chair so he can talk to all the passerby's while he eats. Will my friend be able to ride his 3 wheel adult bicycle up and down the halls of his new "smaller" home? Will my elderly friend who has to walk with a cane now, or ride his motorized scooter or bicycle, have access to a canteen or store within SAFE walking or riding distance? What if he buys something that he's allergic to? The staff at the canteen know these individuals. They know their different textures and allergies and they accommodate them.

Steve, you say when you were Deputy Secretary for Developmental Programs you "visited every state center and met numerous residents". I'd like you to please tell me what residents you spent time with and spoke to? Which buildings did you tour at Polk Center? Northside is connected to the center building where you would have been. Most of the individuals that reside there are able to walk and talk and even feed themselves. Did you see the sensory rooms in Meadowside and Woodside? Did you spend time with any of those individuals over there? What staff did you see or talk to? I'm curious to know because I've seen people like you there before. You spend most of your time there in a conference room talking to the Director of the facility and others about money. If you honestly did visit with individuals, you would realize that they are already home and they do not want to leave.

Not only is Polk Center itself a community, but the town of Polk is also part of the individuals' community. Individuals walk down to the Main Street Market in Polk and talk to the owner and customers all the time. They are all there for each other and help support each other. A couple individuals even work at the Post Office downtown Polk. The speed limit through Polk is 35 mph. There is almost always a cop in town to enforce this. Not that they really even have to enforce it most of the time because people know they have to take it slow through town. Not only for the safety of children and other pedestrians, but because they know that Polk Center is located there and they want to help ensure the protection of the fellow members of their community, the individuals.

Many of the parents of the individuals have passed away by now. But before they died, they made plans for their children to live out the rest of their lives at Polk Center. So now that they're dead and out of the way, you want to move their loved ones? Their parents died believing their children would be taken care of in the place they picked out for them to live! How would you feel if someone else was making decisions for your child? How would you feel if they took your child from your home and moved them to a different home with different caretakers just to save money? How do you think your kids would feel about that?

"The state has successfully closed many institutions over the past 5 decades. They've gotten good at it. The process that works best is when time is taken to plan a person's transition to their new home in a comprehensive and methodical manner- working closely with the individuals, their family, and support coordinator visiting several potential places to live and becoming familiar with multiple providers before choosing one."

I'm sorry... WHAT?!

This is an example of how easily people can take something so horrible and use certain words to make it look good in black and white.

"They've gotten good at it"? SIX people died when they closed the Hamburg center. That's probably more people than in your immediate family. But to the Governor, he just sees the numbers 6 out of 50 on paper and thinks "well, 6 isn't very many".

But it's six people too many! If they were left in their homes, where they wanted to stay, where their family wanted them to live out the rest of their lives, where they BELONG, they would not have died. The stress of moving is hard on anyone. The stress of moving on many of the Intellectually Disabled at Polk Center and White Haven is that of our stress time 10, at least.

"The process that works best..." that statement is a LIE. How can you even say that when most of the time the individuals DO NOT get to "visit several potential places" or "become familiar with multiple providers before choosing one"! You want to know the truth about what happens? The leaders of the group homes all gather together in one place and they hold an "auction", basically, with the individuals being up "for sale". They sit down and someone reads an individual's file as far as health issues they may have and any restrictions and also HOW MUCH MONEY IT COSTS TO PROVIDE CARE FOR THEM. The group home leaders then BID on the individuals like they are cattle at an auction. For example, "We have a 67 year old female with cerebral palsy. She costs approximately \$___ amount of money per month. If this sounds like someone you want to buy, raise your hand!"

THAT is the TRUTH, Mr Steve Suroviec! Mr Tom Wolf! ACHIEVA! The Arc of PA!

You come in to these people homes and you kick them out and SELL THEM LIKE CATTLE!!!

You do not care what happens to them. How many funerals have you attended for individuals that were in any state centers or even in your own group homes?

It took one of Polk Center's severely autistic individuals TWENTY years before he felt comfortable enough to give people hugs. He would not even hug his own mother while growing up. Now he hugs his staff every single time he sees them (several times per day). This man I'm talking about has a daily routine. He likes things a certain way and expects things to happen at the same time every day. He looks forward to it. If you move him from his home, you're going to have an angry, violent person on your hands. It's not his fault. But how will the group homes deal with him? Medicate him until he calms down and sits still? I've seen that happen way too many times in your precious group homes. I've heard stories from people that have worked in your group homes and the over medicating/sedation seems to be the "fix all" answer. If you can't deal with them, drug them up until they're sitting in a corner drooling into their lap.

Many individuals keep asking questions like "What did I do wrong? Why do I have to leave Polk?"

You can tell them they did nothing wrong- that this is all about money, but they won't hear you. They'll dwell on the fact that they believe it's their own fault they're being taken from their homes. And as they're "slowly and professionally" evicted from their homes, they will lose every one and every thing they've ever loved.

Their bodies will not be able to handle it and many of them WILL die. It's not a question. It's going to happen.

So the question comes down to this; at what number of deaths do you finally start to think "maybe this wasn't a good idea..."?

If you do not change the decision to close Polk Center and White Haven Center, I'm afraid your souls will not be able to be saved. What you are doing is absolutely horrible!

PLEASE HELP SAVE OUR CENTERS FOR OUR THREE HUNDRED AND SIX INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED LOVED ONES!!!

Sincerely,
Angel Green