

## **An Interview with OCDD Assistant Secretary Kathy Kliebert An Overview of Changes in OCDD System**

Unfortunately, a lot of inaccurate information is circulating around the state regarding several proposed changes to the state's system responsible for serving people with developmental disabilities that are included in the Executive Budget, now House Bill 1. This misinformation makes change even more difficult for the individuals and families who are going through a period of transition. To ensure that accurate information is available to all those interested in these changes, the *TriAngle* interviewed the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) Assistant Secretary Kathy Kliebert.

The changes include the closure of Northeast Supports and Services Center in Ruston and the transition of individuals with low support needs in the remaining centers to community based services - proposals community advocates have long advocated to implement. OCDD reports that all individuals moving to the community will go through an individual assessment and planning process where appropriate choices will be discussed. The complete interview with Ms. Kliebert is included below.

How would you characterize the proposed changes in OCDD's budget?

***The budget meets the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities in a manner that is cost effective and efficient by accessing less costly privately operated community services as an alternative to institutional services. Louisiana ranks eighth best in the nation in overall fiscal effort related to spending for individuals with developmental disabilities, however, the state is not spending these dollars in the most efficient, nor the least restrictive manner. Louisiana ranks first in fiscal effort directed towards institutions – spending 38 percent of its expenditures on institutionalization of people with developmental disabilities compared to the national average of 19 percent. Louisiana has more individuals in ICFs/DD per capita than any other state, almost four times the national average. Furthermore, Louisiana ranks third highest in the usage of large ICFs/DD although compelling literature shows that outcomes are better in smaller facilities, and even better in the community. The budget re-directs state government resources to building community capacity in a manner consistent with consumer choice, evidence based practices and national trends.***

Why was Northeast Supports and Services Center in Ruston selected for consolidation with Northwest Supports and Services Center?

***When we looked at our centers, Northeast had abuse/neglect issues and clinical staff shortages that we haven't been able to successfully resolve. There were also ongoing management issues that could be addressed through the consolidation with Northwest.***

Where will the Northeast residents be moved and what level of supports will be provided for them?

***We will individually assess each person to determine if their level of need requires the supports provided by a supports and services center. Those that do will transition to Northwest or Pinecrest, depending on which center can best***

**meet their needs. We will also take into consideration where their families reside. Those individuals who pose a risk to themselves or others will receive the necessary supervision in the supports and services center. The remaining residents will receive the supports they need to live successfully in the community.**

Individuals with the two lowest levels of support needs in all the supports and services centers will transition to community based services. Please explain the process OCDD is using to assist individuals and their families in choosing the community services that best meet their needs.

**As a starting point, residents will be assessed using the Support Intensity Scale (SIS) to identify those individuals who don't need the level of supports provided in a supports and services center. We will involve the individual and their family in exploring available options – waiver services and private community homes.**

Will your office follow residents once they move into the community to ensure they receive quality services?

**Yes. Once the individual moves our staff makes quarterly visits and provides transition support and technical assistance to the private provider for one year. This transition support team is in place to not only ensure the health and safety of the individual but also their quality of life. All of these processes were used successfully in the downsizing/closure of Metropolitan Developmental Center in the Greater New Orleans area.**

Moving individuals out of the state's institutional settings into the community is not new to Louisiana – your office has been downsizing its centers for many years and has already successfully closed two centers. Based on your past experience, do you have any doubt that the individuals who will move can be better served in the community?

**Absolutely not. We have tracked individuals after they have left our institutions and in most cases they have increased their satisfaction. Community-based settings not only allow residents more options for individualized care, but also allow them to interact more frequently with family and friends and others in the community.**

OCDD is currently implementing the Resource Allocation Model in the New Opportunities Waiver which allocates services according to an individual's assessed level of need. In many cases, waiver recipients' service hours are being reduced to accurately reflect their level of need. Is the transition of the center residents to the community an indication of the department's policy to implement resource allocation fairly across all settings?

**Yes, we will be using the same instrument and the same process in our supports and services centers to determine the level of need of the residents and working with them and their families to transition them to a less costly and more appropriate community based setting.**

Acadiana Supports and Services Center in Iota will be privatized, not closed. Please explain the process that will be used to ensure the residents will receive the same level of care they are currently receiving.

***Our office will utilize a Request for Proposals process to obtain a private provider that will meet the department's requirements for quality, health and safety. We will work with the parents' association to ensure that the provider will meet their expectations to assure their family member continues to receive high quality supports. As part of the contract process we will include monitoring of individual outcomes and selected quality indicators.***

In response to budget cuts in January 2010, OCDD privatized all of the state's community homes for people with developmental disabilities. Is that working out as well as you had anticipated?

***Yes, it's working well. We are on target to transition the majority of people by April 30<sup>th</sup>.***

How many of those people have chosen waiver services and how many ICF/DD beds have been abolished?

***Twenty-five people to date have chosen waiver services and 92 ICF/DD beds will be abolished.***

Is there anything else you would like to add?

***This budget will assist in the sustainability of services for people with developmental disabilities and includes opportunities that will increase the quality of life for those citizens.***