



DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW YORK

New York's Protection & Advocacy System and Client Assistance Program

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Forest Cotten
518-603-0684
Forest.Cotten@drny.org

Investigation Report: *Abuse and Neglect of New York State Residents at Woods Services in Pennsylvania*

Albany, NY, October 30, 2017 – Disability Rights New York (“DRNY”) released a report detailing disturbing abuse, neglect and human rights violations of New York children and adults at Woods Services (“Woods”) in Langhorne, Pennsylvania. Woods is a large, isolated residential facility for children and adults with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities. Children are routinely placed at Woods through the New York State Department of Education (NYSED) and the New York City Administration for Children’s Services (ACS). Many remain there for years or even decades through funding from the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). In fact, Woods receives millions of dollars from New York every year.

DRNY initiated an investigation into Woods in June 2016 after receiving multiple complaints of abuse and neglect. DRNY found an excessive use of physical restraints resulting in serious injuries to residents. Woods often used these illegal restraints as a substitute for appropriate behavioral programming. There were also assaults on residents, including a young female who was beaten with a shoe. Finally, DRNY uncovered poor sanitation, employment abuses, and substandard internal investigation practices.

"Woods Services and the New York State agencies that continue to fund these placements must be held accountable," said Timothy A. Clune, DRNY's Executive Director.

Monitoring and oversight by the agencies that fund Woods is infrequent and ineffective. Even when violations were documented, Woods consistently ignored directives from New York State to reform its practices. Consequently, New York’s children and adults are at constant risk of death, serious injury, psychological harm, and trauma. DRNY has shared its findings with NYSED, OPWDD, ACS, the Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs and the State Comptroller's Office.

DRNY is the designated independent non-profit Protection & Advocacy System empowered by Congress to provide legal and non-legal advocacy services to people with disabilities in New York. The Protection & Advocacy System was created by Congress as a direct result of the horrific conditions that were uncovered in the 1970s at New York’s Willowbrook State School. One of DRNY’s functions is to investigate allegations of abuse, neglect and deaths in any public or private entity that provides care, services, treatment or habilitation to individuals with disabilities.

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