

PADDC Position Paper on the Community Imperative

Note: In 1979, the Center on Human Policy at Syracuse University wrote *The Community Imperative*, a declaration supporting the right of all people with disabilities to community living. Simply put, the community imperative refuted all arguments in support of institutionalizing anybody because of disability. The Council continues to support the original 1979 Community Imperative statement and its 2003 Pennsylvania revision. (See attached.) We look forward to fulfillment of the objectives of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), including the Olmstead decision in which the U.S. Supreme Court held that people have the right to be served in the most integrated setting which will meet their needs. But, based on what we know in 2012, the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council believes that we must go further. What follows is less a position paper on public policy and more a reaffirmation of core principles and a gathering of new "learnings." This does not make what follows less valuable or necessary. There are times when it is right and proper to state again core principles and to sound a clarion call to move forward.

The Council supports the original 1979 Community Imperative and its 2003 Pennsylvania revision. We hope to see its continued implementation and the fulfillment of the Deinstitutionalization movement, the ADA, and the Olmstead decision.

We have learned that the Community Imperative does not apply only to strict deinstitutionalization, but to all circumstances where people with disabilities are congregated together against their choice and in segregated and non inclusive settings. We call for the expansion of the imperative to address the unwanted and unwarranted use of group homes, small ICFs and day activity and segregated work settings.

We have also learned that formal, institutional organizations seem to give rise to formal, institutional and over structured service settings, and that these lead to over formal, institutional and over structured lives for the people who rely on them.

We call for the deliberate development of non formal, organic, natural supports rooted in generic communities to supplement the formal supports provided by the service system. We believe that friends, faith communities, competitive employment and recreation are the root of true community, and call for these generic community systems to open their doors to people with disabilities. Where possible, and where it does not destroy the nature of these supports, these supports should be supported with funds from the formal service system.

At the same time we believe that formal community systems, while preserving the resources they devote to supporting people with disabilities, should develop ways to provide these supports in ways which are free of bureaucratic strictures and place their design, control, choice and management in the hands of people with disabilities and the people they love. This change should start with those entering the system for the first time.

We believe that systems will become the things by which they are measured, and so call upon community support systems to construct outcome and accountability measures which hold them to standards of individual quality of life, choice, dignity, employment, meaningful activity, Everyday Lives and satisfaction and control.

The Council believes that it is the responsibility of all concerned people, in formal and informal community, to take up a call to action, to fulfill not only the letter of the Community Imperative, but its spirit.