

# **Pennsylvania Coalition *for* Inclusive Community**

The Arc of Pennsylvania | Disability Rights PA | Institute on Disabilities at Temple University | Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council | Vision for Equality

## **Community Integration Frequently Asked Questions (September 2019)**

### **1. What will the process be for individuals and families when Polk and Whitehaven close?**

It is anticipated that Pennsylvania will follow a closure process similar to what was done when the State closed the Hamburg State Center. At Hamburg, each resident worked with professional staff to develop a person-centered plan that included identifying needed medical, residential, day and other supports. Placement options for each resident were developed on an individualized basis with input from family and others. Most individuals and their families chose community settings with support. A few individuals chose other available institutional placements, including at other public or private intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Closure of Polk and Whitehaven is expected to take up to three years.

### **2. Are other states closing their state operated institutions for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities?**

Yes, closure of State Centers is part of a national trend to increase opportunities for community living for people with significant disabilities, consistent with the demand for non-institutional options by people with disabilities and their families. This includes the 13,015 people with intellectual disabilities currently on the waiting list for services in Pennsylvania.

All states have closed at least some of their state-operated institutions as they have increased community options. Many other states have already successfully closed all state-operated institutions for people with intellectual disabilities.

The national shift to community living relies heavily on person-centered planning that is individualized for each person. No two person-centered plans should look alike, just like no two people are alike. By focusing on the individual, Pennsylvania will work to ensure that each person's needs are met, regardless of complexity.

### **3. Are people with complex needs able to be supported to live in the community?**

People with the most significant support needs, including extensive behavioral or medical needs, can and do thrive in the community. Living in the community is not just for people with few support needs. There are many successful examples of people with significant support needs being supported well in the community in Pennsylvania. The State previously closed the Hamburg State Center and successfully helped residents transition into the

community, consistent with each individual's person-centered plan. The Coalition is committed to working with the State and legislature to expand the capacity of services for people with the most significant disabilities in the community.

Community is not about one particular setting or place. Some people want to live alone. Other people want to live with one roommate. Other people want to live in a small group home. All of these continue to be options, even with State Center closures. Just like people without disabilities, people with significant disabilities should have these different options.

**4. People receive both residential and day services at the State Center. Are there day services available in the community?**

Pennsylvania offers a range of day services to people with intellectual disabilities, including people with complex needs. These range from community participation services, employment, day habilitation, and other day programs for people with complex needs. The person-centered approach as part of the closure process focuses on each individual's unique interests and needs to identify both residential and day service options. Transition to the community will provide individuals with increased options for how to spend his/her time during the day, with necessary supports.

**5. Will people currently living in Whitehaven and Polk be able to select institutional care if that is what they choose?**

Yes, if after learning about all the options, the individual or his or her family makes an informed choice for institutional care, it continues to be an option. Pennsylvania has both private and public intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These will continue to be an option.

**6. Will the health and safety for those people who transition from Polk and Whitehaven into the community be monitored?**

The transition of individuals from the State Centers to the community requires ongoing monitoring. As part of the transition process, the State will ensure that the services identified in the person-centered plans are provided. Pennsylvania has a robust system to monitor health and safety of people receiving community services that includes, among other things, licensing, supports coordinators, and a statewide quality monitoring process called Independent Monitoring for Quality (IM4Q). The Coalition encourages Pennsylvania to implement ongoing monitoring and data collection as part of the closure process, as it has with other closures.