



## DELAWARE ASSOCIATION OF REHABILITATION FACILITIES

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**Connie Hughes**

Executive Director

### Member Agencies

AHEDD

AIDS Delaware

Autism Delaware

Bancroft Neurohealth

Benedictine OCP

Brain Injury Association of DE

Brandywine Counseling, Inc.

Center for Disabilities Studies, UD

Chimes of Delaware

Choices for Community Living, DE

Cleanworks Janitorial Services

Client Assistance Program

Community Integrated Services

Community Interactions, Inc.

Connections CSP, Inc.

DE Council on Gambling Problems

Delaware Mentor Healthcare

Delmarva Community Services

Dove Pointe

Easter Seals Delaware and  
Maryland's Eastern Shore

Elwyn Delaware

Freedom Center for Independent  
Living

Gaudenzia Fresh Start

Goodwill Delaware

Homeless Planning Council of DE

Horizon House Delaware

Independent Resources, Inc.

KenCrest Services

Kent Sussex Counseling Services

MOSAIC Delaware

NAMI Delaware

Open Door, Inc.

Opportunity Center, Inc.

Psychotherapeutic Services, Inc.

Salvation Army

ResCare / VOCA DE

The Arc of Delaware

**To: Ms. Ann S. Visalli, Director**

**Office of Management and Budget**

**From: Karen Reiss, Chair**

**DelARF Developmental Disabilities Commission**

**Date: November 23, 2009**

**Re: Governor's FY11 Budget Hearing**

Good afternoon, I'm Karen Reiss, Director of community services for Bancroft, and Chair of the DelARF Developmental Disabilities Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the 24 DelARF member organizations and their staff who provide residential and day services; education; and advocacy for Delawareans with Developmental Disabilities and their families.

Let me start by thanking you for keeping our funding intact for the past year. This funding enabled our consumers to live, work and enjoy their lives in their own homes and communities. During these difficult times, it is important to maintain funding for existing core services. As we face continuing fiscal difficulties, our member agencies are doing all they can to continue providing high quality, community-based core services for our consumers and their families.

But providing those services comes at a cost and with funding based on 2002 figures, community providers have been doing "more with less" for seven years. We can no longer absorb additional costs and provide the same services we did in 2002. Funding cuts would overwhelm our programs and place our most vulnerable population at risk.

Just a few of the realities we face include:

- A single, 1% funding increase in 2004. When combined with the rise in the Consumer Price Index, we have essentially experienced a 19% cut in funding over the last seven years.
- Because of fiscal difficulties, the state has had to shift responsibilities for state-mandated training and pre-employment screening to community providers with no accompanying increase in funding.
- In the past, new special school graduates have received DDDS-funded services, enabling them to be productive citizens in their communities and allowing their families to continue working and generating tax revenue for Delaware. This year we have 77 new graduates who will also need funding to avoid major disruptions in their lives and their families' lives.

- Maintaining a high quality, well-trained workforce is critical for the health, safety and quality of life for our consumers. Turnover is expensive for providers and devastating to our consumers and their families. The typical starting wage for Direct Support Professionals is \$9.50/hour and we have been unable to increase this in four years. Stagnant wages and increased employee contributions for healthcare coverage present real challenges to recruitment and retention. Funding cuts will leave us with no alternative but to layoff employees, decreasing the number of consumers we can serve and increasing unemployment.

Community providers are doing everything within our power to continue providing the high quality supports our consumers need and deserve. In the past year, programs have initiated numerous cost-cutting measures such as consolidating consumer living arrangements, decreasing staff and cutting back on non-mandatory services.

Adequate funding—along with cooperation between providers, consumers, families, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities—will allow us to continue developing additional cost-saving strategies that provide workable solutions to the current budget crisis. Throughout this process our highest priority has been, and will always be, the provision of core services that enable Delaware citizens with developmental disabilities to live, learn and work in their communities.