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Kathy Cooper

From: MARIE ANGELLO <maqpie@comcast.net>
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To: IRRC
Subject: DHS regulation 14-540

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I am writing to you about a recent correspondence from the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) for the state department of human services regulation 14-540, on information regarding their plan for developmentally disabled adults to the integrated model verses participation in a segregated work setting such as the program that I work at APS. The final rule is a federal mandate and ODP is responsible for enforcing PA's transition plan to get into compliance with federal regulations and continue to get federal funding. Aps is a packaging company that employes persons with disabilities. This program gives the individuals purpose, and a place to make money, and feel like what they do is important. The individuals are supported by staff that help train them in their jobs and also offer support to the individuals when they need it throughout their days.

I'm going to start by telling you about me. I have been in this field my entire life (40 + years). I started when I was 18 working in group homes for people with disabilities, as I was going to college fulltime. After college, I worked in a supervised apartment program for individuals with disabilities. After a few years of that I was hired as a case manager for the Division of Developmental Disabilities in the State of New Jersey. I worked for the state for 28 years. Most recently I spent 4 years as a support coordinator in Pennsylvania. I spent two years as an Assistant program director in an Adult training facility and now I am a program specialist in a Sheltered workshop, APS. As you can see I have experienced it all, from residential to day supports for individuals with disabilities. I truly believe that what ODP is planning will be a disaster. The individuals we support need our support. The community is not ready for our individuals in the community. I believe community education and mandates that companies hire individuals needs to happen and be in place before we force the program to community orient our individuals.

When I was a support coordinator I was working with an individual who was getting ready to graduate from high school. I got OVR involved and an assessment was completed. She was assigned a supported employment agency to work with her to find her a job. This woman was a very capable, high functioning individual. She went on several interviews, applied for many jobs and was heartbroken each time she was turned down for employment. How many rejections can one person take. She is now working at APS, a sheltered workshop, and loves coming to work each day, and is making a pay check so she has her own money. This type of situation has happened to many individuals who are now working in this workshop as in others. Sadder stories are out there as well. Several of the individuals did have jobs in the community. They are no longer working competitively for many reasons. If they were to get a job, it would only be for a few hours a week. They would never get hired full time. These situations failed due to the fact that there was little support by coworkers and the bullying and insults from the community were hard to endure. What will happen to individuals who are not as high functioning as these. Individuals who have behavioral issues, or just demonstrate "strange behavior", unacceptable in the community, yet is manageable and supported in the workshop. As I stated earlier, I do believe there is a place for all of our individuals in the community, but the community needs to be willing to work with them. Since the community is not ready or being mandated to hire our individuals and the plan is to close down the adult training and sheltered workshop settings what is to become of our individuals?

What about the families and providers that support our individuals residentially? How will they deal with our individuals being home every day? Parents will have to leave their jobs to stay home with their adult children

who need to be supervised during the day. The providers are not funded to supervise our individuals during the day either. Is the residential budget going to increase to support this decision? In reality forcing programs to close who will suffer the most? the individuals...

And let's talk about choice. For years now I have been participating in training's about person centered planning. Person centered planning can only work if there is an endless pot of money to support it. As I walk through the program and talk to our individuals I do ask them if they like what they are doing and if they would prefer a job in the community, only a few indicate that they would. I feel that that should be the focus. The few that would like a job in the community should get the chance to get a job. I believe this is what is happening, by connecting them up to OVR and getting the ball rolling for them to get a job. The training they have learned from the workshop will carry over and they should be able to be successful. The other individuals that attend the program need this program to continue. They need the support they are getting and the team should continue to see community employment as the long-term goal. Mandating this now will put so many at risk and not benefit very many. I truly hope that the powers at be do something to stop this process before it's too late.

Please Please Please help if you can.....