

DISABILITY RIGHTS MONTANA RECOMMENDS CLOSURE OF MONTANA DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER AND INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY SERVICES

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DISABILITY RIGHTS MONTANA released a report today with significant details of numerous case stories of abuse and neglect at the Montana Developmental Center. Investigations conducted by the Department of Justice over the course of the past year reveal that twenty-seven staff members, including the Director of Quality Assurance and Superintendent, have been involved in the case stories. Some of the cases involve serious injuries, rape, and felony assault.

DRM has monitored MDC for more than twenty years, and cites a climate and culture at MDC that perpetuates and tolerates abuse. The cases cited in the report document slapping, grabbing, squeezing, pulling residents by the ankles, throwing them hard to the ground, kneeling on them, grabbing them by their clothing, and other efforts to control residents. Abuse and neglect has been substantiated against 27 employees this past year.

Residents cannot be reassured they are safe when 20 of the 27 staff who engaged in the abusive and neglectful behavior return to work. MDC Administration is not taking action to keep residents safe.

MDC is not able to hire and maintain adequately trained staff. The facility is consistently understaffed which leads to limited treatment and unfavorable conditions. Today there are at least 22 job vacancies to include direct care and professional staff.

The average population in 2014 at Montana Developmental Center was 50 residents. The cost to operate MDC is in excess of \$15M per year.

DRM is asking the 2015 Legislature to issue a directive to close MDC, and treat our fellow citizens with dignity and respect by providing appropriate community services. “A transition plan, developed by stakeholders that closes MDC and shifts resources into community services can be done. Montana needs leadership to make it happen,” said Bernadette Franks-Ongoy, the executive director of Disability Rights Montana. “The Legislature can be that leader.”

For a full copy of the report and recommendations, please go to our website at www.disabilityrightsmt.org.