

Evidence-Based Policy Initiative

Gathering evidence on policy and practice issues of importance in developmental disability services

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Policy Brief Issues

March 2011

[The effects of community vs. institutional living on the daily living skills on persons with developmental disabilities?](#)

December 2011

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October 2010

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April 2010

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The effects of community vs. institutional living on the daily living skills on persons with developmental disabilities?

Abstract

A review of 37 studies of outcomes over time for nearly 5,000 people with developmental disabilities moving from large institutions to community living arrangements found highly consistency in positive change in daily living skills for the movers. Although 32 studies indicated positive outcomes as compared with five showing negative outcomes (see Chart 1).

Background

Beginning in 1968 the populations of state institutions for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) began to decrease. "State institutions" are defined here as state-operated campuses, buildings or units of buildings with 16 or more residents. In June 1967 there were 194,650 individuals living in state institutions for persons with ID/DD. By June 2008 there were 35,035. As of January 2010 more than half (53.7%) of the 354 state institutions the state institutions operating in the previous 50 years had been closed and 11 state-operated institutions. These trends were further supported by the June 22, 1999 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Olmstead et al. v L.C. et al.* (527 U.S. 581). In its opinion the majority concluded that Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act required states to provide persons with disabilities with community services rather than institutional services when treatment professionals agreed that a community services would be appropriate, the individual did not object to a community placement and the community services could be reasonably accommodated within the resources of the State for such services. Because the decision did not establish a universal requirement for community placement and left allowed for a measure of informed judgment by treatment professionals and state authorities, the evidence-base on the relative benefits and detriments of institutional vs. community placements to persons with ID/DD remains an issue of significance in policy and practice, especially among those states that have made relatively less progress depopulating institutions.

Chart 1. Outcomes of Studies of Changes in Daily Living Skills of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Leaving Institutions for Community Living

