

Voice/TDD:
401-737-1238

Fax:
401-737-1238

Address:
400 Bald Hill Road
Suite 515
Warwick, RI 02886



RHODE ISLAND

Developmental Disabilities Council

Charting a New Course

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**Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council
Concerned about Department of Justice Findings, Calls
for Systemic Reform to End Discrimination.**

The Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council has long advocated for and is committed to ensuring that people with developmental disabilities fully participate in community life. That children go to school in integrated classrooms. That adults attend post secondary education or training, work within their community at or above minimum wage, or develop a business enterprise. That all people have decent homes, friends, and live as independently as possible.

We appreciate the efforts of the Department of Justice in raising extremely important civil rights issues for people with disabilities and welcome the ability to share in our common beliefs. A belief that all citizens, including people with disabilities, have the opportunity for a personally satisfying life, a life that is meaningful, productive, healthy, and safe.

Segregated educational placements, segregated work environments, forced segregated living, and work pay that is below minimum wage is not only an anathema to the Council's mission, but a violation of civil rights. Children who are segregated are more likely to be excluded from the community as adults and that exclusion results in the loss of essential liberties: the right to participate as a full citizen, the right to develop real relationships, the right to live in safe housing, and the right to associate with the people of your choosing. Segregation not only denies the rights of people with disabilities it also violates the rights of the community to have people with disabilities as friends and colleagues. Segregation hurts everyone.

The Department of Justice findings are a forewarning that the state of Rhode Island must act to rectify systematic civil rights abuses. The need for comprehensive reform to end discrimination is necessary. The Council will continue to advocate for the elimination of any continued segregation of individuals with disabilities. We look forward to assisting and providing technical support to people with disabilities, family, organizations, the Department of Education, and BHDDH.

For More Information Contact: Kevin Nerney, Esq., Assistant Director

Email: riddc@riddc.org Website: www.riddc.org