



For Immediate Release

January 17, 2018

CONTACT: Donna Meltzer, CEO,
dmeltzer@nacdd.org

US DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES REPORT ON HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SHOWS NEED FOR GREATER INVESTMENT AND OVERSIGHT

WASHINGTON – Today, the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of Inspector General released a report on widespread abuse in group homes for people with developmental disabilities. While it is important to shed light on and appropriately address such deplorable abuse, NACDD believes that the ability and opportunity to live independently in the community remains an important civil right.

This report about the abuse and neglect of individuals with disabilities living in group homes is certainly cause for alarm and signals the need for a rededication to ensuring everyone has the freedom to live safe from harm. However, we are concerned that some see this as a call for returning to the time when people with I/DD were placed in institutions and hidden away from the community.

“It is life in the community that really is safest,” said Donna Meltzer, CEO of the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities. “When people live, work and play in the community they are visible and folks look out for them and know when something is wrong.”

As Congress and the courts have made clear, society’s instinct to isolate and segregate individuals with disabilities is a form of discrimination, which continues to be a serious and pervasive social problem. Our tragic history of institutions, begun with the best of intentions, resulted in facilities that largely did a great disservice to people with I/DD. Even today, smaller homes that are essentially mini institutions are problematic as evidenced by this report.

“We have the benefit of years of research and outcome studies that show most people with disabilities who have moved from institutions into community environments have made significant gains in adapting to the freedom enjoyed by persons without disabilities. The strong bonds created between people with and without disabilities integrated in the community has led to better outcomes for everyone,” said Meltzer. “There are fiscal and practical challenges with community living, too. State and federal budget cuts have made it harder to provide high quality services and supports in the community. However, returning to the dark days of segregating people with disabilities in asylums is not the answer. Fully funding our commitment to community living is our future.”

NACDD serves as the national voice of state and territorial Councils on Developmental Disabilities. We support Councils in implementing the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act and promote the interests and rights of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

###