



## NEWS RELEASE

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# Union proposes state-operated, community facilities for individuals living in state Developmental Centers

Westerville – Union leaders of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association today are delivering a “Statement of Interest” to propose that individuals with profound developmental disabilities cared for in 10 state-operated Developmental Centers continue to receive care from their state employee caregivers, but in smaller community settings.

In an effort to further downsize the state’s Developmental Centers (DCs), the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) announced it is seeking interest from providers to develop 20, 6-bed facilities in the areas of the state Developmental Centers so that those moving out can continue to receive more intensive services and supports from DC staff, but in nearby community settings. DODD released a Request For Interest (RFI) in February.

OCSEA, the state employees union that represents the majority of DODD employees, has submitted a “Statement of Interest” to ensure that those 20 facilities remain state-operated using existing staff from the DCs.

“The individuals who live in the state-operated DCs have not been successful living in smaller, community settings because of the lack of “continuity of care,”” said OCSEA MH/DD/OVH Assembly President Jeana Campolo, who is a direct care worker at Mount Vernon Developmental Center. “Staff turnover rates are sky high in private facilities due to low wages and lack of benefits. That has a direct affect on individuals’ ability to thrive in community homes,” she said.

Staff turnover rates in the state-operated Developmental Centers are roughly 10 percent, while those in private, community settings run around 40 percent, according to DODD. The average wage of a direct care giver in a community setting is just \$10 while those same workers receive approximately \$16 per hour in the state DCs.

“Many of the individuals remaining in the state’s care at the DCs, have intensive behavioral needs and are dually diagnosed with mental illness and developmental disabilities. They are the hardest to serve and require experienced, long-term staff who know their needs and who are highly trained in dealing with aggressive behaviors,” said OCSEA President Christopher Mabe.

“If the state offers these smaller settings to families with the same, professional caregiver who have been taking care of their loved ones for decades, we believe the success rate into the community will increase dramatically,” said Mabe.

“I make a family-sustaining wage and consider myself a professional in my field. This is my life’s work,” said Campolo. “What parent wouldn’t want their child to be cared for by someone who considers that care their life’s work? That’s what we do.”

*OCSEA represents approximately 33,000 public employees who work in a wide range of security, regulatory, administrative, direct care, maintenance, customer service and other positions, including approximately 2,000 in the Dept. of Developmental Disabilities. For more information, contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell).*