

THE PA WAITING LIST CAMPAIGN

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Pennsylvania Waiting List Campaign: Fact Sheet February 2008

The Pennsylvania Waiting List Campaign is comprised of people with disabilities, parents, family members and providers whose purpose is to end the Waiting List for persons who are served by the Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs, Mental Retardation system.

- 21,359 people from across the state are waiting for services through the Mental Retardation system as of February 2008.
- Each year, 800 students with mental retardation graduate from school to no job, no services and no hope for their future. They and their families are concerned about the quality of life that will result in regression of skills both cognitively and socially.

Also, many of their parents must leave their jobs to stay at home to care for their loved one causing severe economic impact on the entire family.

- Aging parents, many in their 70's and 80's, can no longer provide care for their sons and daughters living at home. As they grow older, they need supports themselves and often are struggling to keep their loved ones safe and healthy.

The Waiting List Campaign appeals to you to lend your voice and give your support for the following initiatives:

Provide services for all of the 4,596 people on the Emergency Category of the Waiting List.

- Provide supports to aging caregivers and older adults with mental retardation. Mental Retardation services must address changing needs across the entire life span. We have tackled early intervention, school age, and this year, transition to adulthood; the next logical step would be aging.
- Continue to support the 800 students graduating from school each year by making this allocation a permanent line item in the budget. Providing support at graduation prevents regression, maintains connections to community, allows parents to continue working to support the household and cuts off the waiting list at the source.
- Support the COLA for mental retardation community services.
- Support community based supports and services for adults with Autism.

Funding for these services will have a tremendous impact for those coming off the waiting list. The Waiting List Campaign thanks and applauds all the leaders across the state that made this possible for people. However, more assistance and attention to this matter is needed. ***We still have more than 20,000 people waiting.***

We respectfully request that the Commonwealth tackle these issues now so they don't grow to points where there is continued crisis. Create a long term plan to address the waiting list. Supporting our most vulnerable citizens is a core function of government and must be a priority. Thousands of people wait for the supports they need to be happy, healthy, productive citizens in their communities.