

**Are People Better Off?
Outcomes of the Closure of Winfield State Hospital
13 Years Later**

A Follow Up to the Final Report (Number 6) of the Hospital Closure Project
Issued by Dr. James Conroy in December, 1998

Submitted to:
The Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities

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Attachment 5

In December of 1998 Dr. James Conroy submitted his final report on the closure of Winfield State Hospital. He referred to the people moving from the hospital as Movers. His report was extensive using a multitude of measures. At that time he stated, "Movers are believed to be better off." (Conroy, p.33)

The logical question is how well Movers are doing today, 13 years later. While we have neither the time nor the resources to replicate Dr. Conroy's work, we believe the 14 quality of life dimensions used by Dr. Conroy offer a strong basis for comparison (Conroy, p. 33). We further believe the parents/guardians of the Movers offer the most reliable information as the Movers do not communicate verbally well or at all. With that in mind we were able to contact 40 parents/guardians of the Movers from 1997. We contacted the parents/guardians via telephone and used the following script to administer the survey.

Script for phone interview:

My name is _____ and I work for Creative Community Living. We are collecting information to share in summary form with the Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities. This information will most likely be used in testimony before legislators as they examine closure of another state hospital. This short survey should only take 5 – 10 minutes of your time. May I proceed? (If answer is "no", ask if there is a more convenient time you can call. If the answer is still "no", thank them and hang up.)

Every parent/guardian we were able to reach participated in the survey.

We anticipated there would be a slight increase in the level of satisfaction with community-based services. We did not anticipate the degree of increase in all dimensions.

| Category | State Hospital | Year 1 | Year 13 |
|---|----------------|--------|---------|
| Health | 2.6 | 2.7 | 4.3 |
| Running his/her own life - making choices | 2.2 | 3.0 | 4.0 |
| Family Relationships | 2.1 | 2.3 | 3.9 |
| Seeing friends, socializing | 2.3 | 2.8 | 4.2 |
| Getting out and getting around | 2.3 | 3.1 | 4.3 |
| What he/she does all day | 2.5 | 3.1 | 4.1 |
| Food | 2.6 | 3.5 | 4.2 |
| Happiness | 2.8 | 3.3 | 4.3 |
| Comfort | 2.9 | 3.4 | 4.5 |
| Safety | 3.1 | 3.5 | 4.3 |
| Treatment by staff | 3.4 | 3.8 | 4.4 |
| Dental care | 2.9 | 2.4 | 4.2 |
| Privacy | 3.2 | 3.7 | 4.3 |
| Overall quality of life | 3.0 | 3.5 | 4.4 |

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The comments offered by many parents/guardians also supported the increase in degree of satisfaction. Below is a sampling of the positive comments:

- Can tell you in every aspect of their lives things are much better now than at State Hospital.
- As far as her life now is concerned, I really couldn't ask for it to be better.
- I think families are much more comfortable visiting in the community than they were at State Hospital. I've seen a lot of change in my life and that was one of the most positive.
- Life improved dramatically as has health.
- At first I was opposed to closure of State Hospital but I feel she would not have had the opportunities she does now.
- I feel he gets much better care now and has better Quality of Life than when at State Hospital.
- Safety is much better now, more one-to-one care.
- There wasn't as much preventative medical treatment, more reactive. I was one of the last to think this was possible.
- Think whole transition has gone well – better for everyone.

Obviously, there was some dissent although very minimal. Approximately 99% related to staff turnover, but there was consistent praise of the job done by staff today. As one parent phrased it, "There is always someone who cares."

Family relationships showed the least level of increase. The comments relating to those scores referred to declining health and death of family members rather than discontent with community settings. As the comment section shows, many family members found it more convenient and/or comfortable to visit in the community.

Dr. Conroy wrote in 1998, "The Kansas experience of the closure of Winfield has been far more successful than this consulting team predicted." (Conroy, Executive Summary) Thirteen years after the closure the success seems to have kept building.

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Attachment S-3

References

Conroy, James W. (1998). Are People Better Off? Outcomes of the Closure of Winfield State Hospital, Final Report (Number 6) of the Hospital Closure Project. *Required by Substitute House Bill 3047.*