

Director defends treatment advice

I am compelled to comment on a statement that appeared in an article Jan. 16 relating a marvelous story about a courageous and talented girl with cerebral palsy.

In that article, the child's mother recalled a diagnosis and opinion by a staff member of the Staten Island Center for Developmental Disabilities that her daughter was "severely retarded and that Willowbrook was the place for her."

Rules of confidentiality prevent me from releasing any information about any case without specific consent. However, I can say that the recollections of the parents and the neurologist are in direct conflict. Our records do not substantiate that diagnosis nor would we have come to that recommendation.

The agency's direct referral was to United Cerebral Palsy because we felt that agency could best meet her needs. Were I able to release copies of our referral letter, it would be clear that our impression was that Diana had normal intelligence. What actual conversation went on between neurologist and parents I shall never know because their recollections are so disparate.

However, I have known the neurologist for several years and this is not the kind of statement he would make. Institutionalization is an anathema to him, whether or not he feels a patient is retarded.

Our agency has been in the forefront of regional efforts to promote deinstitutionalization and to develop and maintain support services and programs designed to prevent institutionalization. I am very proud of our record and the quality of services we provide.

I am upset because there was no effort on the part of the Advance to substantiate or do background on a recollection put in a context that tends to besmirch our reputation and quality of service.

It is nice to know that our original impression and referral were correct and that Diana has done so well. We wish her every success.

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