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ABILENE SSLC FAILS LATEST COMPLIANCE REVIEW

Austin, TX – The Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) has released a monitoring report indicating people with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in the Abilene State Supported Living Center (SSLC) remain at high risk for abuse and neglect due to the facility's continued noncompliance on basic health and safety provisions.

More than two years since the implementation of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) settlement agreement with DADS, the Abilene SSLC has met standards in less than 15 percent of the provision areas for which the DOJ settlement agreement currently requires that they already show substantial compliance.

The Abilene facility continues to show limited to no improvements in many areas and has in fact lost compliance in two major areas in which it had previously been determined to have met standards, including protection from harm – abuse, neglect and incident management; and pharmacy services and safe medication practices.

The following significant failures were reported at the Abilene SSLC:

- According to monitors, "comprehensive, thorough and adequate assessments were missing in many areas, including but not limited to nursing, speech and communication, psychiatry, skill acquisition, and physical and nutritional supports."
- "Of most concern was the lack of overall progress made in the critical areas addressing nursing health management plans, nursing assessment and documentation in response to changes in status, and the quality and timeliness of the quarterly and annual nursing assessments."
- The number of residents confined to their beds appeared to be "troublingly high" to monitors.
- "No data were submitted to verify that implementation of action plans [for at-risk individuals] occurred in a timely manner." Further, the facility had no data to begin to track risk reduction.
- The facility did not provide justification for the use and efficacy of psychotropic medications, ensuring they are essential for individuals' continued stability.
- "Confidence in the recorded [psychological care] data was lacking, yet important clinical decisions were made based on these measures."
- Annual medical assessments were not maintained in a timely manner, and quarterly medical reviews were never found by monitors.
- "None of the 428 individuals living at the facility received direct occupational therapy," while only "forty-six individuals (11 percent) received direct physical therapy service."
- Medication errors "remained a challenge" at the facility, and the pharmacy department did not appear to follow up on possible side effects of new medications.
- Opportunities for learning remained infrequent. "Engagement levels across the individual residences and activity centers were very low, and the observed activities were limited in scope, were often inappropriate for the age of the individuals served, and were clearly not individualized. Further, training in integrated, community-based settings was severely limited."

"The latest Abilene facility monitoring report is truly disturbing, as it indicates the center continues to make little to no progress in its ability to meet even the most basic health and safety needs of residents," said Beth Mitchell, supervising attorney for Disability Rights Texas, the federally designated legal protection and advocacy agency for Texans with disabilities.

“More than two years into the Settlement Agreement, the facility is still markedly far behind where it should be in improving the protections, supports and services it provides to individuals under its care,” Mitchell added. “The Abilene center’s lack of progress is incredibly disturbing given how little time it has left to gain full compliance in all areas.”

For more information on the April 10, 2012, Abilene SSLC Monitoring Team Report, visit www.dads.state.tx.us/monitors/reports/index.html.

For additional information on how all the state supported living centers are performing, visit the Disability Rights Texas onsite Press Room at www.disabilityrightstx.org/who-we-are/press-room/.

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Disability Rights Texas is a nonprofit disability advocacy organization that protects and advances the legal, human and service rights of Texans with a broad range of disabilities. Disability Rights Texas is federally funded and designated as the protection and advocacy agency (P&A) for the state of Texas. In March 2011, the agency changed its name from Advocacy Inc. to Disability Rights Texas.