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SAN ANGELO SSLC FOUND NONCOMPLIANT IN THIRD ROUND DOJ 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 San Angelo 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, which was established to ensure residents' mental and physical health and safety, the San Angelo SSLC was found to be compliant in only 25 of 171 provision areas, a mere 15 percent of all areas.

During the six months between reports, the San Angelo facility actually backtracked in two provision areas, losing compliance in areas related to protection from harm – abuse, neglect and incident management; and integrated protection, services, treatment and supports.

The DOJ settlement agreement delineates specific deadlines by which compliance must be met for each of the 171 provisions, ranging from 2009 through 2013. These deadlines require the San Angelo SSLC already to have met standards in 136 provision areas; the facility was found to be out of compliance in 111 of those provisions, resulting in noncompliance outside of settlement agreement deadlines in 82 percent of areas.

The following significant failures were reported at the San Angelo SSLC:

- In the six months since the last review, restraints were utilized 598 times — a 27 percent increase in the number of restraint incidents.
- Monitors noted, "Reducing the number of restraints at the facility will require a system wide philosophical change in how restraints are viewed and a multidisciplinary effort among all departments."
- A total of 1,735 injuries were reported between May 1, 2011 and Nov. 31, 2011, including 24 serious injuries resulting in fractures or sutures. Monitors noted, "It was not evident that the facility was adequately addressing the high number of injuries with preventative actions."
- On average, there are more than 100 incidents and allegations of abuse each month, but only two full-time investigators at the facility. The facility needs to "aggressively reduce the number of instances of abuse and neglect."
- The Nursing Department continued to be affected by high turnover, with 17 vacant positions across all levels of the Nursing Department, which was 20 percent of the department's total workforce.
- Nurses failed to conduct adequate and appropriate assessments of individuals with high-risk conditions and notable changes in their health status; nurses also failed to administer medications in accordance with standards of practice.
- "There was a continued need for improved staff attention to the details of proper positioning and alignment in wheelchairs and dining chairs and compliance with the Physical and Nutritional Management Plans" in order to reduce choking hazards.
- Monitors found "insufficient numbers of professionals to accomplish roles/responsibilities," including only two full-time psychiatrists.
- Treatment plans do not identify what an individual needs, but instead only recognize what is available at the facility.

“The third round San Angelo review indicates significant failures in the facility’s ability to meet the 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.

“The San Angelo facility’s lack of progress is alarming, given how little time they have left to gain compliance,” Mitchell added. “At this point in time, it is unimaginable that the facility will make the necessary improvements to the protections, supports and services by the mandated DOJ deadline.”

For more information on the Feb. 20, 2012, San Angelo 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.