

This message is for parents, family members and friends – all those who have loved ones with developmental disabilities in California.

Arc-California's Position on *Workforce Service Centers* January, 2003

This is to inform you about a new proposal to drastically change the way community services are made available to children and adults with developmental disabilities in California. The proposal is called the “Workforce Service Centers” proposal. Arc California believes if it becomes law as planned, there will be a serious negative impact on your loved one and your family.

The proposal would establish about 13 new public agencies in California called Workforce Service Centers (WSCs).

- ❖ All direct service staff currently working with children or adults with developmental disabilities in California would have to be laid off by the local, mostly non-profit, agencies that now provide these services.
- ❖ All these staff members (approximately 100,000 people) would be hired by the WSC. Then, a union will come in and organize the workers.
- ❖ Local service provider agencies can then call the WSC to request workers, similar to the way a “temp” agency operates. Some consumers and families could independently request staff directly from the WSC.
- ❖ The staff member's primary affiliation would be to their new employer, the WSC, and to the labor union that represents them.

Local service provider agencies would no longer be the employer of their own staff.

This amounts to a massive reorganization of the developmental disabilities community system. It is being proposed by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). They admit they do not understand the current system well enough to know exactly how the WSCs would work. One aspect of the proposal is, however, very clear: if 100,000 new union members join SEIU with dues at approximately \$30 per month coming out of their paychecks, it will result in over \$35 million in dues paid to SEIU each year.

Arc California opposes the WSC proposal for the following reasons:

1. The WSC would dismantle the local service system by separating staff members from thousands of local provider agencies. Provider agencies and their direct service staff have a very unique partnership. Together they implement a commitment to people with developmental disabilities. This partnership is key to a stable community service system. The creation of the WSCs will destabilize the local agencies and make it impossible for them to fulfill their missions.
2. With this proposal SEIU goes far beyond the legitimate and honorable role of a labor union in America. The ability of workers to unionize when they need a stronger voice with their

employers is a fundamental legal right of workers in this country. But SEIU is attempting to use the legislature and the Governor of California to force the lay-off of 100,000 workers (who have no say in the matter) so that these workers can be located in a setting that is easier for SEIU to unionize. This is inconsistent with the basic principles of American democracy.

3. Arc California, and many others who have examined the WSC proposal, believe that establishing WSCs would greatly increase administrative costs and place a greater strain on an already under-funded system.

Some people involved with California's developmental disabilities system are promoting this proposal because they believe SEIU's political clout will result in better wages and benefits for direct service staff. SEIU claims that the WSCs will enable California to draw down more federal dollars for this purpose. The process of accessing additional federal funds is complex and challenging, even in good financial times. Whether it can be accomplished now, given the difficult state and federal budget situations, is questionable at best. We believe SEIU's "promise" of additional federal dollars is unsubstantiated and misleading.

Arc California is fully aware of the many problems in community services and the urgent need for solutions. But this proposal is NOT the solution. What is needed is a strong unified statewide grassroots legislative effort to assure that California honors its commitment to children and adults with developmental disabilities.

In spite of a widespread negative reaction by the vast majority of experts in the field of developmental disabilities, SEIU will not withdraw their proposal. They are proceeding to introduce legislation to make this proposal the law in California. They intend to use their political influence with Legislature and the Governor to accomplish this.

How you can help stop the establishment of Workforce Service Centers

If you would like to help oppose the Workforce Service Center proposal, please contact Arc California in one of these ways:

Call: 1-800-698-6619

E-Mail: arcca@quiknet.com

Fax: 1-916-441-6619

Write: 1225 8th Street, Sacramento CA 95814

Please include your name, address including zip code, your relationship to people with developmental disabilities, and the best way to contact you. We will keep your name and personal information confidential. We will contact you when there is a need for you to let your legislators know that you oppose the establishment of Workforce Service Centers. Thank you.

Feel free to contact Arc California or any local chapter of The Arc to request a copy of our complete position paper on this issue.

Arc California is a family based membership organization with over 8000 individual members. We have been advocating with and for children and adults with developmental disabilities in California for over 50 years. Arc California is a state chapter of The Arc, a leading national advocacy organization with state and local chapters throughout the United States. There are local chapters of The Arc in communities throughout California.