

[https://dentonrc.com/opinion/advocacy-groups-spreading-misinformation-about-sslcs/article\\_7f00909d-a508-5bab-aca3-812ab8f7b7e7.html](https://dentonrc.com/opinion/advocacy-groups-spreading-misinformation-about-sslcs/article_7f00909d-a508-5bab-aca3-812ab8f7b7e7.html)

POPULAR

## 'Advocacy' groups spreading misinformation about SSLCs

By Michael Danks

Sep 4, 2020



The front gate at Denton State Supported Living Center.

DRC file photo

*An open letter from the Denton State Supported Living Center Family Association regarding the COVID-19 crisis management and correcting misinformation:*

Our State Supported Living Centers (SSLCs) situated across Texas provide the highest-structured standard of care for individuals with severe-to-profound intellectual developmental disabilities (IDD), complex behaviors and medically +

fragile conditions. The global COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage health care services, and providers and these facilities have faced challenges not imagined six months ago. Thankfully, SSLCs have persevered with great success. The SSLCs' operation stands as a blueprint for effective crisis management and has likely saved many lives. Certainly, missteps have been made, lessons are being learned and adjustments are being made by the SSLCs.

Many family association members feel there has been overreach by the state in controlling visitation, but we are confident a solution will soon be reached. Our family association is currently in ongoing discussions with the State SSLC administration and family members as to how best to arrange visitation for our loved ones. It is the consensus among the Denton SSLC Family Association (DSSLCFA) that the facility should be congratulated on their management of the facility during the pandemic.

As guardians, family and friends of those being cared for in our SSLCs, it is disconcerting to discover there are groups and organizations intentionally attacking, discrediting and seeking to eliminate the life-sustaining services provided by Texas State Supported Living Centers. So-called "advocates" of disability services such as the Disability Inclusion Society, Free Our People Project, The ARC of DFW and The Self-Determination Group have criticized the operation of the SSLCs. These "advocate" associations are staffed in part by paid representatives not familiar with the current operation of SSLCs and are funded in part by individuals and groups who seek to profit from closing Texas SSLCs. These groups have distributed misinformation to the media, Legislature and hosted social media "vigils" falsely claiming to represent the majority of individuals and families served by our SSLCs.



By representing our family members, the DSSLCFA believes it our right, in fact our duty, to speak up to provide information on both the success and shortcomings of SSLC operations, as well as our duty to correct misinformation from any group or individuals. We wish to correct the following misinformation:

### **FALSE: SSLC residents are unheard, mistreated and oppressed**

The SSLCs are monitored by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and are required by law to maintain broad-based Human Rights Committees regularly reporting to the DOJ. Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, Gov. Greg Abbott heard and quickly secured needed resources in order to free the residents from COVID effects, and Abbott implemented measures to limit non-essential visitors in order to protect the residents.

### **FALSE: SSLCs are akin to a separate but equal culture**

The claim that the residents suffer in a separate but equal culture is misplaced. SSLC standards are higher and more regulated than any community-based option. SSLCs meet strict federal and state standards, while community-based options lag with little to no oversight by protective agencies.

### **FALSE: Olmstead decision demands elimination of SSLCs**

The claim that the Olmstead decision demands elimination of SSLCs is blatantly false. In the court commentary, Ruth Bader Ginsberg wrote, “This Court emphasizes that nothing in the ADA or its implementing regulations condones termination of institutional settings for persons unable to handle or benefit from community settings. Nor is there any federal requirement that community-based treatment be



imposed on patients who do not desire it” *Olmstead v. Zimring*, 527 U.S. 584 (1998). The SSLCs provide a positive, structured option to those from failed community-based options.

In conclusion, it is disconcerting when groups intentionally attack these life-sustaining facilities. When fallacies are spoken, the DSSLCFA will continue to correct them with the facts. Please feel free to contact the DSSLCFA Executive Committee on our Facebook page for any additional information, including accurate *Olmstead* information.

---

*MICHAEL DANKS is the president of Denton State Supported Living Center Family Association.*

