

COMMUNITY CHOICE ALLIANCE

“We Can’t Afford To Wait!”

**Bazon Center for
Mental Health Law**
202.467.5730
bazelon.org

Disability Connection
228.604.4020
disabilityconnection.org

Disability Rights Mississippi
601.968-0600
drms.ms

LIFE of Mississippi
800.748.9398
lifeofms.com

**Gulf Coast Down
Syndrome Society**
228.447.0270
gcdss.org

Parents United Together
601.856.3623
parentsunitedtogether.com

Mississippi Center for Justice
601.352.2269
mscenterforjustice.org

**Mississippi Coalition for
Citizens with Disabilities**
800.721.7255
msccd.org

**Mississippi Families as Allies
for Children’s Mental Health**
800.833.9671
msfaacmh.org

**National Alliance on Mental
Illness of MS (NAMI-MS)**
601.899-9058
namims.org

Southern Poverty Law Center
601.948.8882
splcenter.org

The Arc of Mississippi
601.982.1180
arcms.org

On December 22, 2011, after a full investigation, the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) found Mississippi in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act’s (ADA) and the United States Supreme Court decision, *Olmstead v. L.C.*, 527 U.S. 581 (1999). In sum, the DOJ’s Findings Letter states that the Mississippi mental health system must be changed! (www.ada.gov/olmstead/documents/miss_findings_letter.doc)

Key DOJ Findings:

- Our service system for children, youth and adults with disabilities, including mental illness and developmental disabilities, violates federal law. The State serves too many in institutions, and not enough in their homes and communities. The State **never fully funded or implemented its own *Olmstead* Plan.**
- As DOJ found, - “*This has led to needless and prolonged institutionalization of adults and children with disabilities who could be served in more integrated settings in the community with adequate services and supports.*”
- Compared to other states, Mississippi serves the highest percentage of individuals with developmental disabilities in large institutions.
- Mississippi spends more money proportionally on institutional care, and less on community services, than any other state. We are still in the process of opening new and expensive institutions, which runs counter to well-established professional and legal dictates.
- Reliance on unnecessary institutional care both violates the civil rights of people with disabilities and incurs unnecessary expense. Focusing on community services and supports will permit the State to support people with disabilities in settings appropriate to their needs in the most cost-effective manner.
- The lack of sufficient community services has forced families struggling to support loved ones with disabilities to choose between living without needed services and placing loved ones in institutional care. It also leads to individuals with disabilities being forced to obtain needed services at inappropriate and costly venues, such as emergency rooms or institutions. For some, the lack of community services, especially crisis intervention, leads to homelessness and incarceration.
- Mississippi has not taken full advantage of Medicaid support for community services. These programs would facilitate the transition of persons with disabilities to community settings with ongoing services supported by a generous federal contribution.
- Mississippi is in violation of the Early Periodic Screening Detection and Treatment (EPSDT) requirements of the Medicaid Act for children under age 21, by failing to provide medically necessary services to children with disabilities.
- Mississippi is also in violation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), by failing to comply with requirements of “Child Find” and failing to educate students with disabilities in their neighborhood schools and with their peers.

The Community Choice Alliance is a coalition of disability advocacy and service organizations. We support prompt, good faith negotiations toward improving Mississippi’s system of care for people with mental illness and/or developmental disabilities.