

Self Advocates Becoming Empowered



'when self advocacy gets started it is like Kudzu you can't stop it!
Gail Bottoms "Kudzu Summit"2001

Alabama Arkansas Florida Georgia North Carolina Oklahoma South Carolina Tennessee

Closing Institutions
October 22, 2015

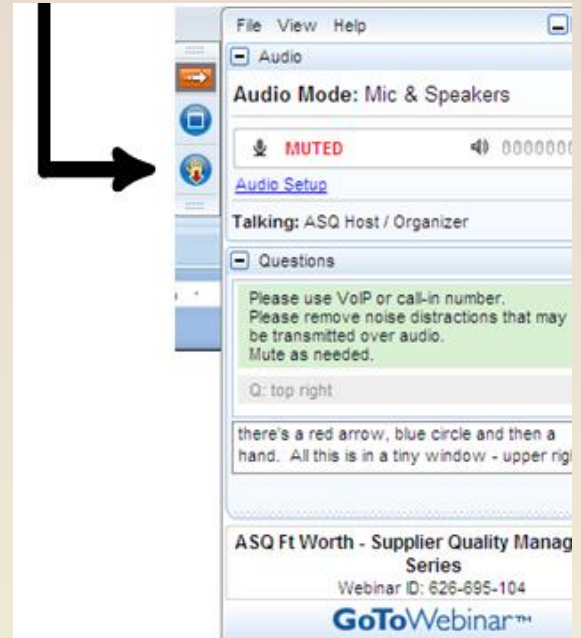


**Hello and
welcome**

WELCOME

Reminders:

- Please mute your device once you join the call
- Remember to raise your hands for questions or write a message in text box
- We will give everyone a chance to ask questions at the end of the presentation



WELCOME

Reminders:

- If you are using more than one device for this webinar, please do not place next to each other, to reduce echoing or feedback.
- Make sure your speakers are turned on.



THE PURPOSE OF THIS WEBINAR

Participants will learn about what other states are doing with closing institutions.

- Alabama will discuss the role P&A played with self-advocates in closing institutions, in particular with Partlow.
- Tennessee will discuss the status on closing individual institutions.



POLL QUESTION #1

Does your state self advocacy group have a position statement on closing institutions?



POLL QUESTION #2

What strategies does your self advocacy group use to work on closing institutions?





Closing Institutions

People First of Tennessee Presenters





The People First of Tennessee Class Action Lawsuits



What Is A Class Action Lawsuit?

- There are two different court systems in the United States: State courts and Federal Courts
- Federal Courts try people who are accused of breaking federal laws and violating the constitution of the United States, including the Bill of Rights.



What Is A Class Action Lawsuit?

- Class action lawsuits are usually filed in federal courts by a group of people, like the parents of some black children did during the civil rights movement.
- Class action lawsuits want the results of the lawsuit to apply to **all the people who are like them** so each person doesn't have to file their own suit

“The lawsuits are about getting us away from the dark ages and getting everybody to be seen as a human being. This is moving us into the 21st Century. Nobody should be making decisions for them. They should be free to make their own decisions. We shouldn’t be institutionalizing anybody. We can’t compromise. Everybody should be able to live in the community.”

– Bill Gage, President of People First of Tennessee, Inc.



When Did People First File Its Class Action Lawsuits?



12/12/91: People First of Tennessee vs. Arlington Developmental Center



12/21/94: People First of Tennessee vs. Clover Bottom, Green Valley, and Nat T. Winston Developmental Centers

Why Did People First Sue the State of Tennessee?

- In 1990 the Department of Justice did an investigation of Arlington Developmental Center
- The Department of Justice said the conditions there were unconstitutional
- People First of Tennessee had members who lived at Arlington Developmental Center
- People First of Tennessee found two attorneys who helped them file the first lawsuit because they had members who lived at Arlington



People First of Tennessee, Inc.'s Institution Campaign The Early Years

1983 Members of People First of Nashville vote to invite people who live at Clover Bottom Developmental Center to join their chapter

1985 Members who live in institutions are included in all trainings, regional meetings, conferences, & legislative awareness events



People First of Tennessee, Inc.'s Institution Campaign The Early Years

1985 The Board of Directors of People First of Tennessee, Inc. votes to make access to self-advocacy for people who live in the State Developmental Centers a five-year priority

1990 Members carry out weekly Rap Sessions at Clover Bottom Developmental Center



People First of Tennessee, Inc.'s Institution Campaign The Early Years

1991 Board representatives meet with the Commissioner to ask questions about the U.S. Justice Department's Letter of Findings regarding Arlington

1991 Board representatives tour the Arlington Developmental Center to view conditions and talk to members who live there



People First of Tennessee, Inc.'s Institution Campaign The Early Years

1991 People First of Tennessee, Inc. files class action lawsuit against the Arlington Developmental Center on behalf of its members

1992 People First of Tennessee, Inc. combats retaliation by the Corporate Guardian and Division of Mental Retardation for filing litigation



People First of Tennessee, Inc.'s Institution Campaign The Early Years

1992 On-going visits to named plaintiffs who live at Arlington

1992 On-going support to members who live at Clover Bottom, Greene Valley, Arlington, and Nat T. Winston Developmental Centers



People First of Tennessee, Inc.'s Institution Campaign The Early Years

1992 Annual “Lest We Forget” Commemorative Service for People who survived or died in institutions

1992 On-going Media campaign: press releases, OP-ED articles, stories, interviews, newsletters, & chapter updates



People First of Tennessee, Inc.'s Institution Campaign The Early Years

1993 First Institution Summit held at the Highlander Research & Education Center: Position Statement on Institutions adopted by the Board of Directors

1994 People First of Tennessee, Inc. files class action lawsuit against the Clover Bottom, Green Valley, and Nat T. Winston Developmental Centers on behalf of its members

What Happened After the Lawsuits Were Filed?



- The State tried to cancel people's membership in People First.
- The Guardianship program tried to cancel people's membership in People First.
- The State tried to scare people's families and got them to sign papers saying they didn't want their family member to be part of the lawsuit.

What is Happening Now?



- Nat. T. Winston Developmental Center **Closed**
- Arlington Developmental Center **Closed**
- Clover Bottom Developmental **Closing** Ceremony is November 5th, 2015
- Green Valley Developmental Center is supposed to **close** in 2016.

People First of Alabama and Alabama Disability Advocacy Program Presenters

Brittany Gore, Elouise Woods and Patrick Hackney



The 1999 OLMSTEAD Supreme Court Decision requires that states serve individuals with disabilities in THE MOST INTEGRATED SETTINGS. Institutions are THE MOST SEGREGATED SETTINGS.



**ALL OF ALABAMA
INSTITUTIONS
ARE **CLOSED****





The W.D. Parlow Developmental Center closed Wednesday. Parlow, opened in 1923, was the state's only remaining facility for the intellectually disabled.

Staff file | The Tuscaloosa News

Partlow



Partlow was the last of five Institutions that closed in Alabama on Dec. 28, 2011. Families objected at first with the Closure but as James Tucker reported as families saw how their loved ones lives improved their objections faded. Alabama was the first Southeastern State to close institutions like Partlow.

Partlow



ADAP investigated Partlow for a year. They held a press Conference at the State Capital Building to give an in-depth report, “At What Cost: Partlow’s Legacy of Shame”. The living arrangements were inhumane, people were abused and neglected, they had very little if any furniture, and not much privacy or choice.

Partlow



Jeff Ridgeway, the President of People First of Alabama at the time, helped lead People First members along with other groups to advocate and encourage for many years to close institutions. Mayor Maddox and local legislatures didn't want to close Partlow.

Partlow



“This is a great day for people with intellectual disabilities because it makes the statement loud and clear that we are people with abilities and we want to be integrated into society rather than segregated into an institution,” Ridgeway said. He said this the day Partlow was closed.

HER EXPERIENCE

Elouise Woods was a leader for People First of Alabama.



Strategies

- Took a positions that all institutions should be **closed** in the early 1990.s
- We wrote a position statement calling for community living for all
- Produced video's of success stories of people living and working in the community



Strategies

- Hosted a luncheon to Celebrate the Closing of the Ireland Center in Birmingham - **the first institution** that was **closed**
- Self Advocates Becoming Empowered chose Alabama People First to go to Wisconsin and work on a plan for closing institutions



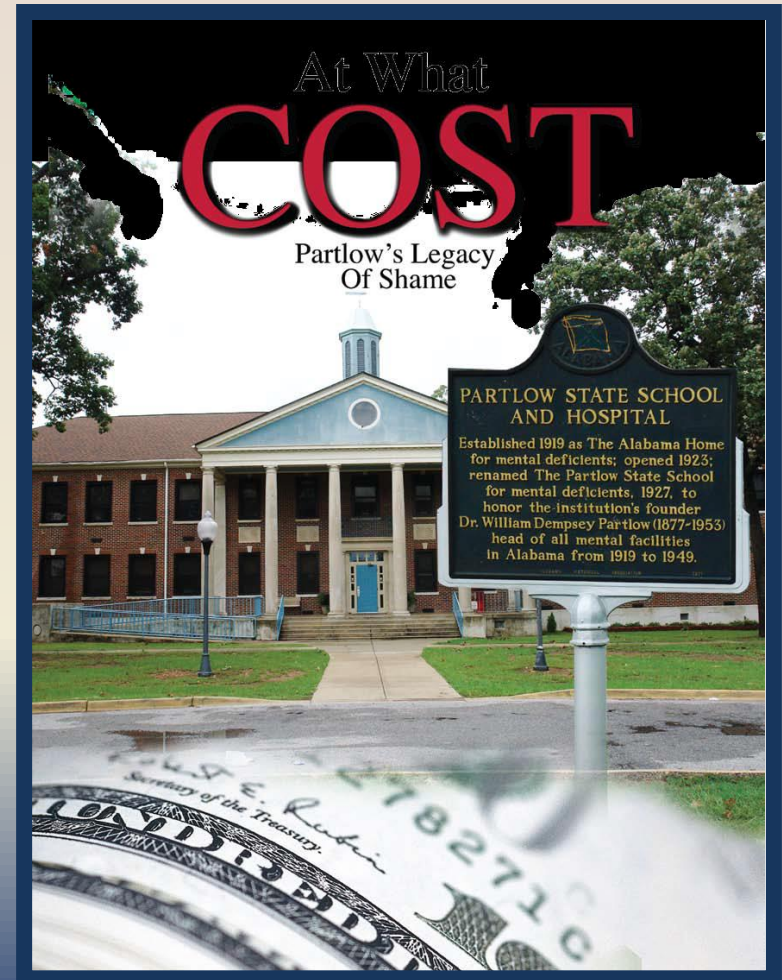
STRATEGIES

- **Organize** how you want to Advocate
- Continue to **push** through barriers
- **NEVER GIVE UP!**
- Figure out what other groups or people that want to help with the closing effort
- Work with your DD partners especially your State's P&A
- **Educate** Community, Local and State officials such as Governor, Legislatures, and Mayor



How your state P&A may be able to help

- Provide information about state institutions
- Organize advocates
- Assist with a report or publication advocating for closing institutions





Position Statement on Closing Institutions

We believe that all institutions, both private and public should be closed. All people regardless of the severity of their disabilities should live in the community with the support they need.

OCSS STATES QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STATE QUESTIONS



1. How has the project been important in your life?

2. What are your success stories
 - That demonstrates the power of the self advocacy movement
 - That demonstrates the importance of peer to peer learning.

ALABAMA COMMENTS



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ARKANSAS COMMENTS



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FLORIDA COMMENTS



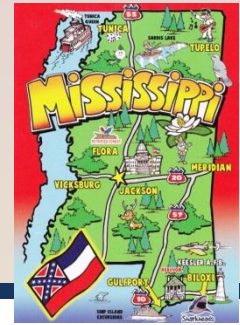
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GEORGIA COMMENTS



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MISSISSIPPI COMMENTS



NORTH CAROLINA COMMENTS



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OKLAHOMA COMMENTS



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SOUTH CAROLINA COMMENTS



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TENNESSEE COMMENTS



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DATES TO REMEMBER

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December 10 Advisory Meeting-
GoToMeeting

January 19 Submit 1st Quarter Invoice and
quarterly Plan update



Next OCSS Webinars

3:30 p.m. EST

2:30 p.m. CST



Webinar dates	Topic
November 19, 2015	Youth Leadership Training, Youth Summits and other ways to Engage Youth

THANK YOU!



Regional Self Advocacy Technical Assistance Center Funded by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.