



DATA TRENDS: July 2000 #12

Summaries of research on mental health services for children and adolescents and their families



Under Court Order

Source: Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law (1999). *Under Court Order*.

A recent report published by the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law summarizes an important Supreme Court ruling in the case of *Olmstead v. L.C.* The ruling significantly affects mental health policy for children and adults. The Bazelon Center report provides an excellent description of how states can expand their resources to comply with the ruling, and to develop policies that reduce unnecessary institutionalization.

The Supreme Court ruling in June 1999 mandated that states must take steps to end discrimination through the unnecessary institutionalization of people affected by mental illness. The new ruling requires states to develop comprehensive plans to identify people who are or who are at risk for being unnecessarily institutionalized. Additionally, states must address the need to provide resources and opportunities for community living for people with severe mental illness. According to the Bazelon Center's report, "a state's plan should address how the state can increase community resources" by:

- Expanding covered services under Medicaid
- Expanding Medicaid eligibility
- Redirecting state hospital spending
- Making full use of federal block grant resources
- Accessing federal programs to support housing
- Insuring that all eligible children and adults receive SSI benefits

The report includes the following topics: 1) the ruling, 2) obligations to the states, 3) populations affected, 4) creation of the plan, 5) payment for community treatment, 6) a checklist for state actions, and 7) resource materials put out by the Bazelon Center. This is relevant and useful reading for advocates, policy makers, researchers, parents and family members, and others who are interested in mental health.

The *Olmstead* ruling offers support to those advocating for children's mental health and family-centered services. It increases the ability of participants in systems of care to serve children with serious mental illness and their families in the communities in which they live, and also improves access to necessary resources and services, thereby reducing the chance of needless institutionalization. Empowering families and providing opportunities to support and serve them will ensure that children are not discriminated against, and that children receive the treatment that they desperately need.

For More Information: www.bazelon.org

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