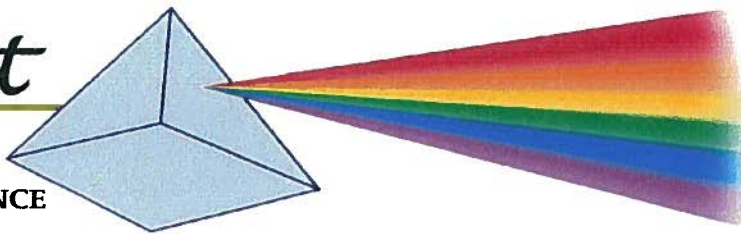


New Light

- PRESUMING INTELLECT
- BELIEVING POTENTIAL
- WITNESSING BRILLIANCE



P.O. Box 761 Clarion, PA. 16214 Ph: 814-226-6444 Fax: 814-226-6487

My name is Deb Andreas and I am the Executive Director of a small, young agency, which provides supports to individuals with developmental disabilities in the community. I am writing to you because the rates proposed by ODP for the services we will supply in the upcoming fiscal year are so low they could realistically put us out of business. Should this happen, approximately 55 of the state's most challenged citizens currently served by our agency and more than 195 employees would suffer as a result. I am sure we are not the only agency concerned with the current rate adjustments. I also recognize the complicated financial condition of our state. However I need for you to understand the unique role our agency is currently fulfilling for people who are struggling, their families, and the governmental agencies that are responsible for their care across the state.

Our agency, New Light, Inc. is based in Shippensburg, a small town in Northwestern Pennsylvania and we recently opened a satellite office in Chambersburg, Franklin County at the request of several families in that area. We have only been in operation since January 26, 2009, but the experience of my partners and I in our respective areas in the human service field exceeds 100 years combined. Our agency currently supports 34 individuals in community living arrangements throughout Clarion, Clearfield, and Jefferson counties. Our shared/family living arrangement program serves 8 individuals in Mercer, Clarion, Armstrong, Indiana, Clearfield, and Franklin counties. The home and community habilitation program is supporting 13 individuals in Clarion, Armstrong, Indiana, Clearfield, Jefferson, Venango, Forest, and Franklin counties. Additionally we have provided both planned and emergency respite service for many individuals and counties throughout the state. The home counties of the people we serve include Philadelphia, Berks, Lehigh, Northampton, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Lycoming, Potter, Franklin, Clearfield, Jefferson, Indiana, Armstrong, Huntingdon, Mifflin, Juniata, Bedford, Somerset, Clarion, Forest, Venango, and Mercer. If you find yourself stunned by the rate and scope of our growth, my partners and I are no less so. However I do understand how and why this has happened and believe that it is crucial for you to understand this as well. It is only through this understanding that you will be able to appreciate what a travesty it would be to lose what this little agency brings to those served by ODP in the state of Pennsylvania.

The difference between our agency and many others is our philosophy and approach. Over my thirty plus years in this field I have heard many people speak to their belief in Positive Approaches, but have never seen a group bring that philosophy to life in the way this agency does. County agencies across the state have come to know that we are the people to call when no other agency is willing to serve someone. We will always say yes no matter how challenging or desperate a person's circumstances.

Once we commit to serving a person, we stay committed no matter how difficult the task becomes. Our approach to supporting people is rooted in building relationships and creating environments where people can feel heard, respected, safe, and loved. Behavior is understood as communication, not a problem to be modified or extinguished. We are an agency that anticipates the needs of the system by maintaining respite settings at our own expense because we know emergencies happen.

As a result the people we are serving are the ones the system has all too often failed and deserted. Because they could not fit easily into allocated slots and available beds, they have been restrained, abused, traumatized, intimidated, misdiagnosed, overmedicated, and abandoned by our service system. I am continually amazed when I am contacted by service coordinators from across the state. They tell me that there is no agency in Philadelphia, the Lehigh Valley, the Wyoming Valley, Pittsburgh or anywhere else in the state that is willing to serve a particular person. Yet here is our little agency, believing that people are all more alike than we are different, willing to accept people sight unseen, adapting supports and environments to fit the individual, never restraining, never restricting, and never giving up until we have helped that person to achieve a life they value. If you were to ask any of the people we serve, their families, or the counties they come from, you would begin to understand how necessary and welcomed this change is.

Due to the incredible demand that appears to exist in this state for the services and approach we offer, we have had to hire on a significant work force, which currently exceeds 195 people. In rural northwestern Pennsylvania and in a climate of challenging economic times, our agency has become an opportunity for solid employment. We do our best to treat our employees with respect and equity. They earn better than average wages for the geographic area. They are offered full benefits at the company's expense. Many of the people who have come to work for us are people who have been displaced by layoffs and plant closings. If you asked our employees, most would tell you this is a good place to work and has given them a new start at providing for themselves and their families.

And so I would ask you to please use whatever influence you have in your current position to help increase our ODP assigned rates to a reasonable level that can sustain the valuable supports we are providing. Please do this for those we are supporting who express they feel safe and loved for the first time in their lives. Please do this for our employees and their families who have fond hope in these frightening economic times. If New Light is forced to close its doors due to rates that are too low to support the most basic support needs, our greatest fear is that the people we love and serve will once again be failed by the system. They will repopulate state centers, state hospitals, prisons, or even be sent far from their families to out-of-state placements. This is the travesty of which I have spoken. Please do not let this happen. I would love to have the opportunity to discuss this situation further at your convenience. I can be reached by phone at (814)226-6444 or (814)316-5304 or by email at newlightinc@newlightnewlife.net. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter.

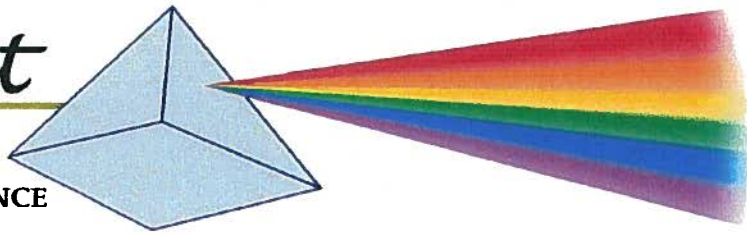
Sincerely,

Debra J. Andreas, MA

Executive Director, New Light, Inc.

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**New Light Inc.
Low Rate Proposal Concerns
Fact Sheet**

- New Light, Inc. was licensed January 26, 2009
- Currently serves 55 individuals with developmental disabilities (34 in CLA, 8 in Shared Living, 13 in Home & Community Habilitation)
- Individuals come from the following counties: Philadelphia, Berks, Lehigh, Northampton, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Clearfield, Jefferson, Armstrong, Indiana, Huntingdon, Mifflin, Juniata, Franklin, Bedford, Somerset, Mercer, Venango, Forest, and Clarion
- New Light, Inc. currently employs 195+ employees in the Clarion, Dubois, and Chambersburg area
- No restraints, No restrictive procedures, No eject/No reject policy
- Serves individuals no other agency will serve
- Proposed rates for upcoming fiscal year represent a 53% cut while other agencies only received 4.73% cut
- New Light, Inc. is being penalized for being unsuccessful in submitting a requested cost report on October 16, 2009 due to computer transmission difficulties
- Proposed residential rates are so low after covering the most minimal staff support only \$964 would be left to cover all other expenses (rent, utilities, food, supervision, administration, insurance, etc.)
- Proposed shared living rates will not cover the provider's stipend let alone other associated expenses (benefits, training, monitoring, supervision, administration, insurance, etc)
- Proposed rates would leave the agency operating at a \$200,000+ deficit per month