

**A RESOLUTION TO BE SUBMITTED BY
LEGISLATORS RATH & LORIGO**

Re: Opposing Institutionalizing Children with Adults in Psychiatric Centers of Excellence

WHEREAS, the New York State Office of Mental Health has unveiled a sweeping plan to consolidate and reduce the number of state-run psychiatric hospitals from 24 to 15 over a three year period; and

WHEREAS, this plan includes the closing of all children's psychiatric centers and inpatient units, including the West Seneca Children's Psychiatric Center, and combining these units into "Centers of Excellence" generally designed to serve adult patients with significant mental disorders, not children; and

WHEREAS, many of these adult patients are individuals designated through the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, institutionalization of children in these "Centers of Excellence" will require the sharing of facilities and services with adult psychiatric patients; and

WHEREAS, children currently in residence at West Seneca are between the age of 4 years and 18 years of age and are at high risk for future institutionalization without the proper care and treatment; and

WHEREAS, the resulting exposure of these children at risk at the proposed "Centers of Excellence" to adult influence and circumstances beyond their control can be both unhealthy and dangerous; and

WHEREAS; the closure of children's centers, similar to the Children's Psychiatric Center located in West Seneca, will result in many children from other areas of the state who will be housed in institutions far away from their homes, creating unacceptable hardships for families expecting to stay in contact with their children serviced by these distant institutions; and

WHEREAS, accommodations for these children at risk should be made in all regions of the state in order to allow families to stay connected.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Erie County Legislature acknowledges the importance of maintaining an adequate and safe environment for our citizens and especially for children at risk; and be it further

RESOLVED, the Erie County Legislature opposes the combining of children's psychiatric services in "Centers of Excellence" with adult patients and supports the retention of separate "Centers of Excellence" exclusively for children in comfortable and park-like settings

similar to those found at the Western New York Children's Psychiatric Center located in West Seneca New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be forwarded to Governor Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, and the Western New York delegation of the New York State Assembly and Senate.

Fiscal Impact of the Resolution: None