

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
1985 SESSION

CHAPTER 99  
SENATE BILL 80

AN ACT TO ASSURE CONTINUITY OF CARE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH  
MENTAL RETARDATION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. G.S. 122-55.8 is rewritten to read:

**"§ 122-55.8. Assurance for continuity of care for individuals with mental retardation.** – (a) Any individual with mental retardation admitted for residential care or treatment for other than respite or emergency care to any residential facility operated under the authority of this Chapter and supported all or in part by State appropriated funds has the right to residential placement in an alternative facility if the client is in need of placement and if the original facility can no longer provide the necessary care or treatment.

(b) The operator of a residential facility providing residential care or treatment, for other than respite or emergency care, for individuals with mental retardation shall notify the area authority serving the client's county of residence of his intent to close a facility or to discharge a client who may be in need of continuing care at least 60 days prior to the closing or discharge.

The operator's notification to the area authority of intent to close a facility or to discharge a client who may be in need of continuing care constitutes the operator's acknowledgement of the obligation to continue to serve the client until:

- (1) The area authority determines that the client is not in need of continuing care;
- (2) The client is moved to an alternative residential placement; or
- (3) 60 days have elapsed; whichever occurs first.

In cases in which the safety of the client who may be in need of continuing care, of other clients, of the staff of the residential facility, or of the general public, is concerned, this 60-day notification period may be waived by securing an emergency placement in a more secure and safe facility. The operator of the residential facility shall notify the area authority that an emergency placement has been arranged within 24 hours of the placement. The area authority and the Secretary shall retain their respective responsibilities upon receipt of this notice.

(c) An individual who may be in need of continuing care may be discharged from a residential facility without further claim for continuing care against the area authority or the State if:

- (1) After the parent or guardian, if the client is a minor or an adjudicated incompetent adult, or the client, if an adult not adjudicated

incompetent, has entered into a contract with the operator upon the client's admission to the original residential facility, the parent, guardian, or client who entered into the contract refuses to carry out the contract, or

- (2) After an alternative placement for a client in need of continuing care is located, the parent or guardian who admitted the client to the residential facility, if the client is a minor or an adjudicated incompetent adult, or the client if an adult not adjudicated incompetent, refuses the alternative placement.

(d) Decisions made by the area authority regarding the need for continued placement or regarding the availability of an alternative placement of a client may be appealed pursuant to the appeals process of the area authority and subsequently to the Secretary or the Commission under their rules. If the appeal process extends beyond the operator's 60-day obligation to continue to serve the client, the Secretary shall arrange a temporary placement in a State facility for the mentally retarded pending the outcome of the appeal.

(e) The area authority that serves the county of residence of the client is responsible for assessing the need for continuity of care and for the coordination of the placement among available public and private facilities whenever the authority is notified that a client may be in need of continuing care. If an alternative placement is not available beyond the operator's 60-day obligation to continue to serve the client, the Secretary shall arrange for a temporary placement in a State facility for the mentally retarded. The area authority shall retain responsibility for coordination of placement during a temporary placement in a State facility.

(f) The Secretary is responsible for coordinative and financial assistance to the area authority in the performing of its duties and for assuring a continuity of care placement beyond the operator's 60-day obligation period.

(g) The area authority's financial responsibility, through local and allocated State resources, is limited to:

- (1) Costs relating to the identification and coordination of alternative placements;
- (2) If the original facility is an area facility, maintenance of the client in the original facility for up to 60 days; and
- (3) Release of allocated categorical State funds used to support the care or treatment of the specific client at the time of alternative placement if the Secretary requires the release.

(h) In accordance with G.S. 143B-147(a)(1) the Commission shall develop programmatic rules to implement this section, and, in accordance with Part 3 of Article 2F of Chapter 122 of the General Statutes, the Secretary shall adopt budgetary rules to implement this section.

(i) As used in this section, unless another meaning is specified or the context clearly requires otherwise, the following terms have the meanings specified:

- (1) 'Area authority' means the area mental health, mental retardation, and substance abuse authority.

- (2) 'Client' means an individual who is admitted to and receiving service from, or who in the past had been admitted to and received services from, a facility.
- (3) 'Commission' has the same meaning as in G.S. 122- 23.2(2).
- (4) 'Department' means the North Carolina Department of Human Resources.
- (5) 'Facility' has the same meaning as in G.S. 122- 23.2(4).
- (6) 'Incompetent adult' means an individual adjudicated incompetent.
- (7) 'Operator' has the same meaning as in G.S. 122- 23.2(5).
- (8) 'Person' has the same meaning as in G.S. 122- 23.2(6).
- (9) 'Residential facility' means a 24-hour facility in a nonhospital setting, including group homes.
- (10) 'Secretary' means the Secretary of the Department.
- (11) 'State facility' means a facility that is operated by the Secretary."

Sec. 2. This act is effective upon ratification.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified, this the 16th day of April, 1985.