



## The Arc of Illinois Calls on Urgent System Reform

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Equip for Equality, the federally mandated independent protection & advocacy system for Illinois, recently released a disturbing report titled "[Choate Developmental Center: Why No One Should be Left Behind](#)." This report sheds light on the shocking issues faced by residents of Choate Developmental Center, a state-run facility for individuals with developmental disabilities. The report outlines alarming concerns, offers recommendations, and calls for immediate action to ensure the safety, dignity, and inclusion of all individuals with developmental disabilities.

In the spring of 2023, Governor Pritzker announced a plan for transformation at Choate Developmental Center aimed at improving the quality of life for its residents. However, as stated in the report, “...Equip for Equality’s site visits from October 2022 through July 2023 revealed that the measures that have been implemented to date, despite being meaningful, have not translated into sufficient improvement to the care and safety of individuals at the facility.”

Based on over 2,000 hours of observation and document reviews conducted over two years, the report reveals a deeply troubling situation continues to exist at Choate. Residents of the facility, many of whom are individuals with developmental disabilities, face numerous challenges, including inadequate access to therapy and services, excessive use of restraints, verbal and physical abuse by staff, lack of medical care, and a lack of dignity and respect in their treatment.

Equip for Equality's report also points out that the problems identified are not new. Similar concerns were [raised in 2005](#) and again in [2009 by the United States Department of Justice](#), which highlighted systemic issues in care and safety. Despite these past alerts, little substantial change has occurred.

Amie Lulinski, Executive Director of The Arc of Illinois, expressed deep concern for the individuals living at Choate stating, “When is enough,

enough? As outlined in the Equip for Equality report, Choate has been under intense scrutiny for years, however, abuses have been reported as recently as last month. Illinois needs a detailed strategy going forward to make the Division of Developmental Disabilities vision of a reduced SODC census and increased community capacity a reality. This includes a continuing strong investment in community services to put Illinois on par with the rest of the nation.”

Equip for Equality's report serves as an urgent call for immediate action. The Arc of Illinois stands ready to assist the governor with a safe and thoughtful process to achieve the report's recommendations. The Arc of Illinois urges policymakers, stakeholders, and advocates to unite in their commitment to create a safer, more inclusive future for all Illinoisians with developmental disabilities.

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