



# WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler  
District 32



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**Week of February 18, 2008**

## **Quality Standards and Protections for the Developmentally and Mentally Disabled**

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In Missouri, there are resources available for those with disabilities and their families through the Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MRDD). For many struggling with a disability such as cerebral palsy, autism, epilepsy, or learning disabilities, these services are a major factor in their quality of life. These people are some of Missouri's most vulnerable citizens, and we need to make sure that safeguards are in place to prevent mistreatment and abuse. This is why I filed Senate Bill 1081, a bill that would standardize and support quality assurance and safety for facilities and programs serving the disabled in our state.

The first provision of SB 1081 concerns the Family Care Safety Registry, which protects children, the elderly, and the disabled by providing background information about potential caregivers. The legislation would add mental health workers to the registry, making it possible for families to get background information on these workers before placing a developmentally disabled family member in their care. In order to make sure that suspected abuse is properly reported, a provision in the bill would require direct care staff from MRDD to report suspected abuse in the same manner as physicians, nurses, and psychologists are already required to do.

When an unfortunate case of abuse does occur, we need to make sure that it is dealt with in an efficient way so that the abuser will no longer be able to do harm. The Missouri Department of Mental Health also maintains a list called the Disqualification Registry, which contains the names of individuals who are disqualified from working with people. The list consists of individuals with substantiated charges of abuse including sexual abuse, neglect, or physical abuse. Senate Bill 1081 would require any employee of a group home or residential facility for the developmentally disabled that has been placed on this list to be terminated.

Another important part of SB1081 standardizes the regulations for all group homes and residential facilities for the developmentally disabled. Currently, private and state-run facilities have different standards and regulations, but the bill would make sure all facilities in the state are subject to the same federal and state laws, regulations, and monitoring. Another aspect of the bill would make sure that those in the private sector are subject to the same regulations as public employees by requiring employees of mental health providers to complete the same training as is required of employees of public group homes and mental health facilities.

Another provision of the bill would implement a provider assessment on intermediate care facilities similar to the fee currently placed on hospitals, pharmacies, nursing homes and Medicaid-managed care organizations. The funds collected by this fee would then draw an estimated 2.7 million in additional federal dollars, the bulk of which will be used to strengthen quality assurance and safety efforts by adding approximately 56 staff members responsible for quality assurance of MRDD community providers. (Private facilities that fall under MRDD will receive fee reimbursements.)

Senate Bill 1081 works to ensure that the developmentally disabled in our state have access to safe, quality services. This week, the bill was heard in the Senate Health and Mental Health Committee. It is my hope that my fellow lawmakers will join me in making sure that quality assurance and safety are a priority for mentally and physically disabled service providers in Missouri.

*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper  
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate.*