Parent Journeys: From Fear to Fulfillment
Dedicated to
the Georgia
Children's Freedom Initiative

Creating a Georgia in which no children live in institutions or nursing homes.

Founding Members:
Georgia Advocacy Office
Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities
Institute on Human Development & Disability
People First of Georgia
Statewide Independent Living Council

Parent Journeys: From Fear to Fulfillment is a publication of the Institute on Human Development & Disability based on the research of Dr. Zolinda Stone-man, IHDD Director. Funding for this publication is provided by grant #90DD0477/02 from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, Administration on Children & Families, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. If you have a disability and need assistance to obtain this publication in an alternative format, please contact IHDD through www.IHDD.UGA.edu or by calling 706-542-3457.
River's Crossing was the first institution in Georgia to close. Since the closure in 1996, Institute on Human Development & Disability researchers have closely followed the 39 children and young adults who lived at River's Crossing. All of the residents were children when they moved away from their families.

Key findings from IHDD research are presented on the left-hand pages and actual quotes from parents and families are shared on the right. For most families, journeys began in fear, but ended with the joy of knowing that their adult child is living a fulfilled life in the community.
Over 75% of families feared the closing of River's Crossing and community living. Many believed their sons and daughters needed an institution.

Two-thirds of parents reported feelings of stress and anxiety.
I felt] Distressed, disturbed, a lot of anxiety.

Upset... Very traumatic. I nearly had a nervous break-down trying to cope with it.

Scared.

A lot of stress. What happens if it doesn’t work out?
After the move, parent satisfaction with community living was high.

Over 80% said community living worked for their child after the very first year.
“Go for it.” They can do it. They have a much better life.

Give it a try for the child’s sake.

The rewards for our son have brought peace of mind, and he is having a wonderful life.
Almost 100% of parents feel confident that their child is safe and secure and no longer fear community living.

Of course, they still have the same concerns and worries of any parent about safety and preventing abuse.
All of the neighbors like him and look out for him.

People watch for him and ask about him. They want to know where he is when they don’t see him.

I now Am more secure about this son’s safety than I am about my other two sons who are in public school and college.
Living in the community improved the quality of life for the child according to almost 90% of families after the first year.

Improvement was still being reported by about 90% of families after the eighth year.
She seems happier…

One-on-one care works. He has his own room with pictures. He likes his home.

Able to see him in grocery store and other places with manners and restraint. Now, he doesn’t grab and run.

He’s more verbal, more responsive and seems to enjoy life more.
Every parent reported changes in behavior that were not thought possible.
Looks healthy, well
groomed, able to move
about better.

**Climbs**

**Steps**

And walks much better.

Different son, almost
seizure free and he
smiles a lot.

Calmer, happier, no soft
helmet or protective
gear...
Over 90% of families visit more often and for longer periods of time.

The number of family visits more than doubled in the first year.
Definitely worth having her close by. She has more choices and we like to visit her. Life is better in a lot of ways.

Try community. You visit more, because it is closer to home.
At the end of eight years, these young people with disabilities are making an impact on their community far beyond the family.

Growth in awareness of the person not the disability is mentioned most.
seeing him as an individual who has a personality and wit of his own.

He approaches people and talks to them. He brings smiles to their faces and makes them unafraid of someone who is challenged.
Ingredients for SUCCESS:
 Loving, stable caregiver
 Family involvement
 A true feeling of home
 Community membership
 Meaningful roles that give a sense of worth