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## DHS Celebrates Choice and Dignity for People with Disabilities

**GLENWOOD, Iowa** – Department of Human Services Director Charles Krogmeier Monday praised Iowa's efforts to support choice and dignity for people with disabilities as he helped celebrate a pivotal Supreme Court decision.

"Under the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision a decade ago this month, Iowa has come a long way to empower people with mental health disorders and other disabilities to have a forceful voice in decisions made about their care," he said.

Krogmeier thanked the Iowa Olmstead Consumer Task Force, the Iowa Statewide Independent Living Council and Centers for Independent Living, and the Heritage Area Agency on Aging and its Institutional Bias campaign for their work in advocating for improvements across Iowa for people with mental health and other disorders.

The event at the Glenwood Resource Center was one of several to be held around the state this month to commemorate the June 1999 Olmstead decision. In a landmark Georgia case, the court declared that people with disabilities who can safely live in community settings must be given the option to do so.

"We embrace the Olmstead concept and we must keep up the pressure to provide quality services close to home," Krogmeier said. "We must remember the challenge that the Supreme Court put before us a decade ago. We need to have community supports in place to provide the dignity of choice for anyone with a disability."

Krogmeier said that people with disabilities have already shown their ability to win important changes in their own lives and those of others, and he encouraged them to stay vigilant.

"You understand that you have the power to change the systems that affect your lives. Nurture that power and that grassroots energy. Find the common ground with other disability groups and then insist on your place at the table. Recognize and thank, as I do, the Iowans with disabilities who are working for a strong, unified voice on issues that matter to you, such as those who helped put together today's celebration," he said.

Discharges have exceeded new admissions at both Glenwood and a smaller state facility in Woodward for several years as officials continue to find more and more community options.

While Krogmeier said it's important to continue that trend, he also said that people currently living in congregate facilities will not be forced to move.

"We know there are people who may prefer to live in congregate settings and we will continue to work with these people and their families to find the most appropriate services that meet their needs," he said.

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