

Assisted Living Workgroup

**Dr. Jay Reeve, CEO, Apalachee Center and
Chair, Florida Council for Community Mental Health**

August 8, 2011

- ♦ **Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.**
- ♦ **I am pleased that the Governor has appointed a workgroup to address a critical housing and assisted care issue in communities throughout Florida.**
- ♦ **I was saddened by the reports of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deplorable living conditions in ALFs in Florida.**
- ♦ **I'm sure that there are many excellent facilities that care about their residents. What I'm concerned about are those that don't.**
- ♦ **First, I believe that the regulation of the ALF industry must be aggressive and by-the-book. Failure to meet standards should result in fines and moratoriums. Repeated evidence of facility deficiencies should result in the loss of license. Statutory changes should be assessed to determine the need for stiffer criminal penalties for abusive and neglectful care and those that might facilitate civil actions against owners/operators. Limited ALF subsidies cannot be an excuse for lax enforcement of regulations.**
- ♦ **We need to explore alternative mixed-housing models that take advantage of economies of scale, while diminishing the segregation and isolation of older adults and disabled individuals in separate housing.**
- ♦ **We should study those facilities that provide excellent care with no more per resident revenues than those that provide substandard care.**
- ♦ **We need to identify and visit successful housing models in Florida and other areas of the country.**

- **I am particularly concerned about individuals with severe mental illnesses warehoused in inadequate ALFs with limited mental health licenses that provide limited care and where residents have little to do.**
- **We need to broaden the housing choices for people with mental illnesses, letting them choose how to use their housing and economic assistance supports.**
- **We need to challenge communities and the private housing sector to develop attractive and affordable housing alternatives (e.g., New Orleans new low-income and mixed housing communities).**
- **We need to focus on what we can do - not on what we can't accomplish.**
- **At some point, we are going to have to revisit the level of OSS or other forms of subsidy needed for decent housing.**
- **New housing options can create jobs, while giving people a better place to live.**
- **Thank you and I wish you well in coming up with game-changing recommendations.**