

My name is Karen Healy, I live in Hartford and I vote. I was also institutionalized in several places including Cedarcrest 2006 to 2007 and CVH 2007 to 2014.

I believe that people who enter a psych facility with severe issues and disabilities just having them sit around in a day room or bed room with no activities to help them learn about their illness, without any structure is not good.

Just sitting in a ball, sleeping for hours is not going to get them better. They may become more depressed, more violent towards themselves or others.

While I was there I witnessed staff putting hands on clients, causing bruises. There was a lot of verbal abuse, making fun of people in the day room in front of everybody.

I saw people who did not speak English or Spanish be incapable of communicating except one or two times a week when an interpreter would come in.

What I would like to see is for staff to be better trained in how to deal with people's disabilities. For people to be together according to their needs so they can get appropriate treatment to return to the community and be successful.

Clients need legal rights, they need patient advocates who are NOT employed by the institution, who are independent and free to speak. I have the right to the correct psychiatric

treatment and the right physical treatment. I was supposed to have special aquatic therapy for severe hip problems and rarely had them.

People doubted me, they felt I would always be a screw up and institutionalized. There were some staff who did believe in me and it was through their efforts and support as well as my family that I was able to be discharged. At the final case management meeting my mother/conservator was told to never let me have my hip surgery, they did not believe I could handle it. They said they expected me to be back in one to two weeks.

It is now 3 years as of December 4th. I had my surgery. I am no longer in a wheelchair. I have had a volunteer job for a year. I have had a part-time paying job since June. I have gone through many weeks of withdrawal from the high dose narcotics I was given while in CVH.

People should not be judged because they have long-term psychiatric or physical illnesses. Everyone deserves the chance to be treated well and have as normal a life as possible.