

# INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY GROUP SERVES INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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The Individual Advocacy Group was founded by Drs Charlene Bennett & David Brooks in 1995 to serve people with disabilities in 21 Illinois counties. Dr Bennett, Ed.D., President & Executive Director, is a Professor of Education who is interested in children with special needs, be they medical, physical or cognitive. Dr Brooks, Ph.D., CEO, is a licensed Clinical Psychologist who has worked on behalf of people with Developmental Disabilities for over 25 years, especially those with behavioral and emotional challenges.

The not for profit organization provides training programs, behavioral and individual therapies, community based residential programs (a Fox Valley center is located in Oswego), advocacy and case management for individuals who have intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health disorders, brain injuries or other physical/medical conditions. They work with the Illinois Departments of Human Services and Children & Family Services, the Better Business Bureau and area Chambers of Commerce. Since 2009, the IAG has served people in Washington, D. C. as well as Illinois.



The Mission Statement of the organization says that it exists to provide a full array of quality, outcome-based, functional and age-appropriate person and community centered services and supports for those with disabilities while providing support and solace for their families. IAG ensures opportunities that will promote the best possible outcome for each individual including being active and valued participants at home, school, work and in their communities, having lasting and meaningful relationships with family, friends and neighbors, developing and exercising personal abilities and gifts and enjoying personal security and individual rights.

There are many programs and services to assist individuals with disabilities, including employment support, the Community Integrated Living Arrangement (CILA) through which the individuals' residences are independently controlled; they rent their own homes, are responsible for the lease and all living expenses. Another option is an Intermittent CILA for those who have the ability to live independently but still require some services to help them integrate into the

community.

In the Host Family program, a family offers to accept one or two individuals with intellectual or Developmental Disabilities to share their home as family members.

Other programs include Behavioral Services tailored to each individual, Developmental Training which helps people acquire the interpersonal skills necessary to participate in the community, Home Based Services which provides coordination for those with disabilities who do not meet the criteria for residential care and are able to live with their own families, a Traumatic Brain Injury program which provides case management services for individuals with a brain injury who prefer to remain in their home, and the Transition Living Program which supports DCFS wards 18 to 21 years of age who may have a wide range of impairments. Each person's program is developed by and for them without respect for their disability or place of residence.

Individual Advocacy Group depends on the public to assist with funding and support of its programs and services through participation or underwriting a sponsored event such as the Annual Golf Outing or Gardener Foundation's Dracula Ball Fundraiser, making a one time or Planned Giving donation, or volunteering time or special assistance by sponsoring an individual or residence at Christmas or a birthday. Individuals served by IAG have created several unique Greeting Cards; a pack of ten, including envelopes and free shipping, are available for a donation of \$25.

For further information, call 630/759-0201.