

Mary Gyori

Brattleboro VT 05301

Hello, I'm Mary Gyori. I live in Brattleboro just down the road from my 38-year-old son, Sasha, who was brain-damaged after birth when his lungs collapsed.

Sasha receives developmental services from Families First. He has lived with the same shared living provider for 19 years. She provides the stability he needs to live safely in the community and work 3 part-time jobs.

In addition to his cognitive impairment, Sasha is totally deaf, legally blind and has bi-polar disorder. It takes a lot of training to get his support staff up to speed with:

1. learning sign language
2. his vision needs and
3. his behavior intervention needs.

With his combination of disabilities, Sasha is stable only as long as the developmental services system is able to adequately provide the services he needs. His highly-trained support staff need a living wage to afford to pay their bills and work in developmental services.

It's a fragile, chronically-underfunded system run by people who really care about people like Sasha. Underfunding causes people like Sasha to be thrown into crisis situations that they don't understand - such as loss of staff and homelessness - which need expensive crisis intervention.

Sasha has needed crisis team staff twice in the last 12 months when he lost his day support staff. This is a waste of resources, training and tax-payer money.

Developmental services staff need to be paid a decent, livable wage so that they can afford to continue working in this field and Sasha can remain a stable, productive member of his community.

Thank you for listening.