

Letter about group homes reflects a terrible reality

The March 4 letter, "More group homes needed for people with disabilities" was right on. Our 15-year-old autistic son Ian is violent and destructive. He also has mental disabilities, operating at a 2- to 5-year-old level.

In January, he moved into a group home after six years on waiting lists. Last year, we called the police seven times. Ian was hospitalized four times. On one occasion, he hit a cop.

Ian should have been discharged into residential placement in January 2014, the first time he was hospitalized. This didn't happen because there aren't enough adolescent group homes available, so the hospital discharged Ian home. This happened every time he was hospitalized, no matter what hospital. Had we not taken Ian home, we would have been charged with abandonment.

We reported the matter to the New York

State Department of Health on the advice of Social Services. The health department said they would investigate and send us a report. It has been nearly a year and we received nothing.

The waiting lists are growing. Perhaps foreclosed homes could be remodeled to become residential placement facilities. There is a need for an emergency unit for autistic people, a place to take them during a violent/destructive outburst, a place with staff who provide appropriate treatment and followup and arranging for residential placement when necessary. Perhaps such an emergency unit could be opened in the old West Seneca Developmental Center on East and West Road.

Wake up, Albany!

GLEN J. GORDON

KIM A. GORDON

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