

## **Mountain Valley's Response on Recent Metro Denver Issues**

Two recent issues involving services for persons with developmental disabilities have resulted in a good deal of television and newspaper coverage in the Denver area. I would like to state in the strongest possible terms that no one at Mountain Valley condones these excesses and that we would never allow such abuse of the public trust to occur within our organization.

The first incident, which was the subject of an investigation by a Denver television station, involved a private for-profit business that was withholding 52% of the funds provided for the persons served within host homes. This amount included federal funds that were specifically designated for supporting the individual's room and board services. Since the organization is a Program Approved Service Agency (PASA), which in this case is also a for profit corporation, the level of transparency that non-profit Community Center Boards (CCBs) like Mountain Valley must adhere to is not required. It would be unfair to state that all of these funds were "pocketed" as profit as the provider agency does have responsibility for a number of supports for individuals receiving host home services. However, Mountain Valley meets all of these obligations at a cost far less than ½ of the amount withheld by some of these entities. In fact there have been some instances where we have paid the provider more than 100% of the rate due to the high need of the person served and that State funding does not always cover the real costs of meeting the needs of persons served. We feel that host home providers have huge responsibility in supporting the persons in their care and that fairness in reimbursement is critical in recruiting and retaining qualified and caring providers. Additionally, Mountain Valley's audited administrative costs have consistently run between 8.5% and 9% for many years.

The other situation is more serious in terms of the impact that it may have on all 20 CCBs, including those of us who have a long history of commitment to ethical business practices. Within Colorado, several of the CCBs receive property tax funds through a local mil levy. Mountain Valley does not receive mil levy funds and all but one of the CCB's that do are located along the Front Range. Rocky Mountain Human Services, which is the CCB representing Denver County, receives approximately \$11 million annually from a county mil levy. As a result of concerns that were raised due to fiscal instability and parent complaints, the Denver County Auditor performed an audit of the organization and found many concerns with the organization and its lack of accountability for the public funds that it received. RMHS has replaced its Executive Director and CFO and is well on its way to implementing changes necessary to prevent future abuse.

Unfortunately, dissatisfied families and advocates in the Denver area are now requesting that all 20 of Colorado's CCB's be investigated and that new legislative action occur to increase accountability and transparency. Included within this is proposed legislation to bring the CCB's under the Colorado Open Records Act. Mountain Valley has always considered the public to be entitled to information regarding its business functions and makes audits, board minutes, etc. available to any interested party. These are regularly posted on the MVDS website. Also, board meeting times and agendas are posted and meetings are open to the public. The issue that we do have is that CCB's are being singled out due to the problem of one CCB and that we may be targeted with additional bureaucratic compliance issues. We actually support expanded accountability and transparency but feel that it should apply to all entities that receive the majority of their funds from public sources and not just CCB's, which are already held to a much higher standard both statutorily and contractually than the PASAs that also benefit from public support.

If you should have questions about these issues or Mountain Valley's business practices please contact me ([bruce@mtnvalley.org](mailto:bruce@mtnvalley.org) or 970 230-9700. Bruce Christensen, Executive Director