

Mortality Rates:

Residential Habilitation Centers and Community Residential Services

Background:

February 2, 2010

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) often receives questions and inquiries about the rate of deaths of people with developmental disabilities living in Residential Habilitation Centers (RHCs) and those who live in community residential settings. The Division is thorough in completing mortality reviews and compiling data on deaths of individuals who are receiving services from the State. In an effort to address some of the most asked questions we have compiled the following information:

What is the Division's response to comments "when people move from the RHCs they die?"

That information is not true. Annual mortality rates in community-based settings are comparable to those in state facilities, with a slightly higher mortality rate in the RHCs.

An example is the downsizing effort at Fircrest School when 57 people were moved during the 2003-05 biennium. Of the 57, three people died after moving and a fourth person who was on a short-term stay at Fircrest later died after returning to her home in the community. Each death was carefully reviewed. In every case, the death was not related to the moves from Fircrest. It should be noted that three of the four left the RHC for community-based supports because of their own or their family's request. One person transferred to another institution.

How does DDD know the cause of death?

In August of 2003, DDD established a consistent process for review of deaths of individuals supported by the Division. Policy 7.05, Mortality Reviews, is a three-part mortality review process of all deaths of clients who were receiving any residential services funded or authorized by DDD at the time of their death. These reviews are intended to monitor support systems and programmatic operations to ensure reasonable medical, educational, legal, or psychological interventions were being provided prior to deaths. A "reasonable" intervention is one that would have been possible given known circumstances and resources available. It should be noted that DDD is not an investigative body. Any unusual or suspicious deaths are immediately reported to law enforcement, Residential Care Services, Adult Protective Services, or Child Protective Services.

Interlake School in Medical Lake near Spokane was closed in 1994. What happened in that transition?

All people who were moved from Interlake because of the legislated closure were able to move to the place they desired, whether it was the community or another RHC.

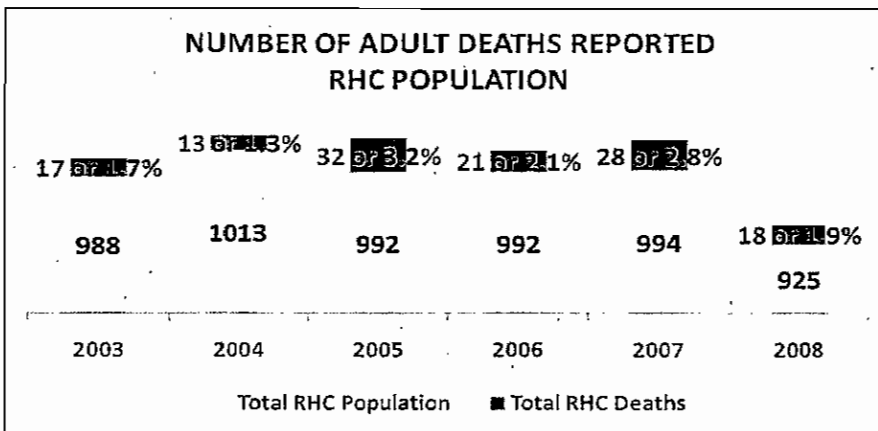
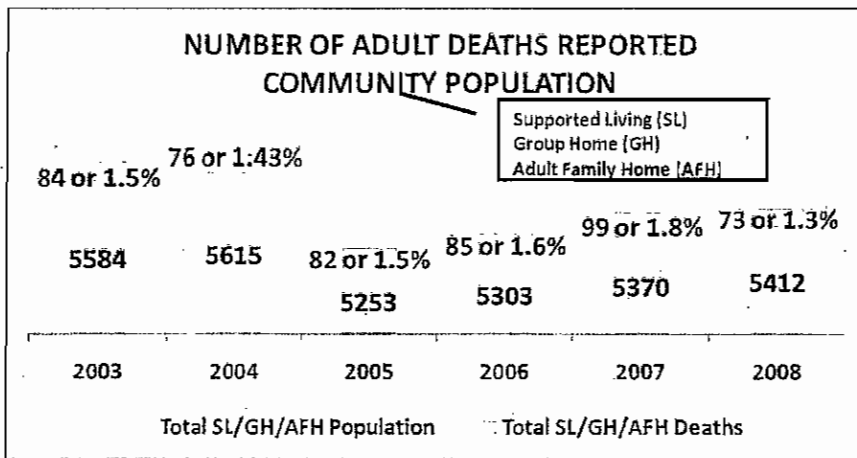
- ✓ 23 residents moved to the community.
- ✓ 59 residents moved to Lakeland Village on the same campus grounds.
- ✓ 18 residents moved to Fircrest School in Shoreline.
- ✓ 11 residents moved to Yakima Valley School.
- ✓ Six residents moved to Rainier School in Buckley.

The Interlake closure created an opportunity for DDD staff to move residents in the other RHCS, who wanted to move. This enabled Interlake residents to move to their preferred RHCs.

One year after closure, three people died in community residences and two at other RHCs. These deaths were not due to their move out of Interlake.

What is the death rate in RHCs in comparison to people living in supported living in the community?

The data collected shows mortality rates in community-based settings are comparable to those in state facilities. The two charts below, compiled by DDD, are for the period January 2003 through December 2008. There were 129 deaths in the RHCs and 499 deaths in supported living, group homes, and adult family homes in the community. When averaging the percentage over that period, it shows the percentage of deaths, were about 2.2% of the total population in the RHCs and 1.5% of the total population living in supported living, group homes, and adult family homes in the community.



Related information:

- Frequently Asked Questions: RHCs Proposed Closures and Transfer of Residents.
- DDD: A System of Health, Safety and Habilitation
- DDD Mortality Reviews Policy 7.05 [Mortality Reviews](#)

To receive related information contact:

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