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## Tinley Park care facility closing: Quinn makes it official that Howe Developmental Center will be closed

### Tinley Park facility's disabled adults to move by April, Quinn says

By Lolly Bowean

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In a decision that will affect about 250 adults with disabilities and some 700 employees, Gov. Pat Quinn on Friday announced the closing of the beleaguered Howe Developmental Center in Tinley Park.

The state-run care facility has been at the center of controversy for years, losing its Medicaid certification in 2007 and nearly \$30 million in federal funding.

A number of advocacy groups and watchdog agencies argued that the center had a pattern of neglect and substandard care and is to blame for the deaths of at least 31 disabled adults since 2005.

But supporters of the facility, which include parents groups and employee unions, argued that Howe's problems have been exaggerated and politicized.

While the 12-member Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability voted to close Howe in April, Quinn had the final say.

In May, he commissioned Anne Shannon, the former president and CEO of Aspire, a service agency that helps children and adults with disabilities, to examine the quality of care for residents at Howe. In June Shannon recommended to Quinn that the facility be closed.

Residents at Howe are expected to be moved by the end of April, Quinn said.

"It is with the utmost consideration for the well-being of the residents and staff at Howe Development Center that I make this decision," he said in a statement. "The state will work diligently to ensure a smooth transition for current Howe residents to appropriate settings."

There are 251 residents. No new clients were being accepted because of the decertification. Leaders and organizers who said the facility was subpar applauded Friday's announcement.



"It's absolutely the right decision and we recognize it was a controversial decision and we believe the governor did the right thing," said Zena Naiditch, president of Equip for Equality, a not-for-profit watchdog group that advocates for the rights of people with disabilities.

"This decision closes an unfortunate chapter in the way we serve individuals with developmental disabilities in Illinois," said Jacki Neil Boss, board president of The Arc of Illinois, an advocacy group for the developmentally disabled. Officials with AFSCME, a union that represents public and health-care workers, lamented the loss of jobs for the 694 employees.

"Instead of working to restore quality care for those individuals who need it, Gov. Quinn is turning his back on the Howe community," said AFSCME Council 31 executive director Henry Bayer. He called it "a crushing blow to Howe residents and their families, the deeply committed staff, and the local elected officials who overwhelmingly supported and fought to save the Howe center and its essential services."

Betty Turturillo, president of the Howe Family and Friends Association, called the decision a travesty.

"Many people will be affected by this, the individuals that live there mostly," said Turturillo, whose daughter, Angela, 57, has been at Howe since 1974 and is happy with the care. "They will be taken from a home they've known for many years. Their families will be devastated and so will the staff that has worked so hard to take care of them."

*Tribune reporters Bonnie Miller Rubin, Joel Hood and Ray Long contributed to this report.*

[lbowean@tribune.com](mailto:lbowean@tribune.com)

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