

Presentation to the Joint Commission on Health Care
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September 4, 2008

Hello. My name is Sara Ruh. I am here today to tell you a little bit about my life, my dreams, my goals...and what you can do to help.

I am 22 years old and I have an intellectual disability. In many ways, I am not that different from you. I have dreams just like you. I want to help people, just like you. Like you, I want the world to see me for who I am, but first I need to be able to show the world who I am.

Now-I was going to speak with you about the wait list. But I found out just last week that I did not make the "special needs cut" because eligibility criteria is based on needing to live in an institution. I'm asking you to remember that there are many of us out there who don't make this cut-but we need a little help to reach our dreams.

Here are a few of my dreams: I want a career. I want to get married. I want a family. I would like to live in Richmond in my own apartment and not live with my parents for the rest of my life. I want my own life.

Are these dreams too big? Are they really that different?

No. What many people call their "everyday lives", I call my dream. What makes mine a dream is that I need a little bit of help to make it all work. I'd like some help at work so I can have a career. I'd like someone to help me to go to the grocery store and balance my checkbook so I can have my own place. I need some good transportation to help me get back and forth from my home, my job, my everyday life, just like anyone else.

I am taking a class right now at VCU and there is a student there who helps me, she helps me take notes, helps me understand what the teacher is saying, helps me stay organized. This opened some doors for me-I graduated a college class and I made some really great friends my own age.

I can make the grade-I just need the opportunity.

Someone once said, "Be the Change you Want to See in the World". Please help make my dreams my everyday life..."A Life Like Yours". Help me have my own story to share, my own career where I can contribute, my own home where I can be a part of my community...my own life .

Thank You.