

Pennhurst and the Struggle for Disability Rights

This program commemorates the 30th anniversary of the closing of Pennhurst State School and Hospital (November 1987), a state-funded and managed institution for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In the age of eugenics, Pennhurst was imagined as a model facility, and a solution to the problem of hereditary 'feeblemindedness.' Instead it became a nightmare institution where exploitation, abuse, and medical experimentation were commonplace. Over eight decades (1908-1987), more than 10,600 citizens were incarcerated at Pennhurst.

As public controversy swirled and the federal courts intervened, Pennhurst became the epicenter of the disability civil rights movement in America. A panel of participant-experts will lead a discussion of Pennhurst's place in the history of disability rights and public policy. Each participant is affiliated with the Pennhurst Memorial and Preservation Alliance.

Video:

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