



# From Snake Pits to Cash Cows: Politics and Public Institutions in New York

*Paul J. Castellani*

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*Explains why public institutions for people with developmental disabilities have persevered despite plans to eliminate them.*

Public institutions for people with developmental disabilities continue to operate within New York State, although their very existence has been condemned, and public policies directed their complete closure by the year 2000. *From Snake Pits to Cash Cows* investigates why these institutions persevere despite virtually universal predictions of their demise. Paul J. Castellani's provocative account spans the years 1935 to 2000, describing decades of conflict and confusion about the role of public institutions. This book demonstrates how and why a convergence of operational, fiscal, and political crises in the mid-1970s resulted in a series of agreements among adversaries that radically changed the political landscape, and reversed the plan to close all public institutions. He also shows why New York's experience has implications and lessons for the study of public policy in the area of developmental disabilities services and for understanding Medicaid policymaking, intergovernmental finance, and human services administration.

"...this is a terrific book, and must reading for those who want to understand how it is that intergovernmental financing systems evolve into political tools that shape and structure public policy." — *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*

"The scope of this book makes it significantly more than simply a recitation of what happened when. Rather, it draws upon several disciplines for organizing concepts and substantive research findings to describe developments in New York State government efforts to deal with a major social problem." — John J. Gargan, editor of *Handbook of State Government Administration*

"There is no more lucid and perceptive analysis of how Medicaid policy is made and gamed. Castellani knows what policy makers do and can write about it for scholars and students." — Daniel M. Fox, President, Milbank Memorial Fund

"Castellani succeeds in weaving a compelling story about the role of elected and appointed officials, families, federal courts, unions, and nonprofit organizations against the backdrop of federal and state funding. The result is important documentation of the interplay of politics, public funding, and interest groups." — Colleen Wieck, Executive Director, Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities

"This book provides a thorough and interesting account of the developmental services world in New York. It is an amazing use of historical developments." — Beryl A. Radin, author of *Beyond Machiavelli: Policy Analysis Comes of Age*

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