

Landmark legal battle as woman with Down Syndrome seeks to live independently and overturn her parents' decision to put her in a home

By [DAILY MAIL REPORTER](#)

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A Virginia woman with Down syndrome is wrapped up in an intense legal battle with her parents as she seeks the right to live independently against their wishes. Margaret Jean Hatch, 29, recently told a Newport News courtroom 'I don't need guardianship. I don't want it,' cutting the judge off mid-sentence.

'Remove her from the courtroom,' the judge then commanded.



Legal struggle: Margaret Jean Hatch, 29, of Virginia, right, is wrapped up in an intense legal battle with her parents, left and center, as she seeks the right to live independently against their wishes



Seeking independence: Hatch, known as 'Jenny' to those close to her, says she wants to move in with her friends and carry on with the life she was living, working at a thrift shop and riding her bike
It was a trying day for both sides.
Hatch, known as 'Jenny' to those close to her, says she wants to move in with her friends and carry on with the life she was living, working at a thrift shop and riding her bike .
But her parents want her to remain in a group home under supervision, the [Washington Post](#) reports.
Her legal case began in August, 2012, and is ongoing.
Her struggle has captured the attention of national advocacy groups and residents in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia, who have shown Hatch their support through the mantra 'Justice for Jenny.'
The case, on a larger level, reflects how the rights of adults with disabilities are often tested when it comes to their desire to live independently, according to the Post.



Hatch has Down syndrome, an IQ of 52 and a tendency to shower her affection on both strangers and friends alike. Hatch has Down syndrome, an IQ of 52 and a tendency to shower her affection on both strangers and friends alike. According to court records, she enjoys hanging out at the Republican headquarters near her job, participating in Special Olympics, attending church and watching Rachel Ray.

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- Court records also reveal a contentious relationship between the petite blonde and her mother, Julia Ross, who reportedly suffers from health problems.

When asked if she would allow her daughter to move back in if the family had assistance, Mrs Ross said, 'No, ma'am. Jenny told me that she does not want to have anything to do with me,' according to the case manager.



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'Justice for Jenny': Hatch's struggle has captured the attention of national advocacy groups and residents in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia, who have shown Hatch their support through the mantra 'Justice for Jenny'

Though Hatch is described as having 'good survival skills,' she is also described as somebody who hugs and kisses people she doesn't know well and somebody who lacks the rudimentary math skills needed to calculate how much change she should receive when she makes a purchase.

Hatch has run away from group homes on more than one occasion, court records show.

While living in a group home in Hampton, Virginia, she reportedly took a trip by herself to the zoo and the beach.

A supervisor at the group home described Hatch as 'adored by all who know her,' but also stated that the group home was not a good fit for her, according to documents submitted to the court.

The group home is designed for 'individuals who are not as advanced and acclimated as Jenny,' the supervisor said.



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Escaping supervised living: Hatch has run away from group homes on more than one occasion, court records show