NCDHHS Outlines Priorities to Strengthen the State's System of Community-Based Services and Supports for People with Disabilities in the 2022-23 Olmstead Plan

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RALEIGH – The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services published its Olmstead Plan, designed to assist people with disabilities who receive or are eligible for publicly-funded services to reside in and experience the full benefit of being part of day-to-day life in communities alongside those without disabilities. Developed with stakeholders from across the state, the plan's goal is to divert people from entering institutions and to support those wishing to leave.

The Olmstead Plan serves as a blueprint for how NCDHHS, the Office of the Governor and other governmental agencies and their partners, with support from the North Carolina General Assembly, make decisions about services to fund and support the health and well-being of North Carolinians with disabilities. The plan outlines an approach to the array of services and supports vital to community living. Access to housing, employment, home and community-based services and other supports are addressed in the plan.

"The Olmstead Plan captures our Department's total commitment to build towards the vision in which every North Carolinian can live, work, and thrive in their communities," said NCDHHS Secretary Kody H. Kinsley. "The plan supports building capacity in our community-based health care services and supports and furthering the infrastructure that enables health such as transportation, employment, and housing. I look forward to working with all of our stakeholders to implement this plan."

The plan incorporates years of work across NCDHHS and North Carolina to refine and re-define policies and programs so they more clearly align with the U.S. Supreme Court's imperative in the *Olmstead v. L.C.* ruling regarding community integration. The plan builds on the foundation of NCDHHS' Transition to Community Living and Money Follows the Person programs. It also expands the work to address social determinants of health that are at the heart of NCDHHS' Healthy Opportunities initiative.

"The Olmstead Plan will become the filter through which DHHS will develop disability and aging policy," said NCDHHS Deputy Secretary for NC Medicaid Dave Richard. "We are grateful to the many community partners who helped develop this plan and will continue serving as trusted advisors as we implement it."

In its first phase, the plan is a strategic framework with measurable targets for 2022 and 2023, including:

- Strengthen alternatives for community inclusion for individuals and families through increased access to home and community-based services and supports.
- Implement strategies to recruit, train and retain the frontline staff who provide daily services that allow people to live, work and thrive in their communities.
- Transition people to more independent living situations from institutional and segregated settings and provide needed supports in the community for individuals who are at risk of entering these settings.
- Increase opportunities for supported education and pre-employment transition services for youth, as well as competitive integrated employment opportunities for adults with disabilities.
- Address disparities in access to services.
- Increase input to public policymaking from families and individuals with lived experience.
- Use data for making quality improvements in the provision of services.

The Olmstead Plan will direct the development of diverse work plans, aligning the activities of NCDHHS and other state agencies with its goals.

The Olmstead Plan Stakeholder Advisory's (OPSA) 36 external stakeholders have met quarterly and in committee for 15 months, advising NCDHHS on all aspects of the plan. The NCDHHS Office of the Senior Advisor on the Americans with Disabilities Act and its contractor, the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC), released an October 2021 draft that incorporated the insights, expertise and lived experience of the OPSA. The now final version reflects a review of 91 public comments.

A new OPSA will be formed to monitor and assess the progress and outcomes of the plan. This will include evaluation reports, integration with departmental strategic plans and alignment with other relevant entities. The Local Management Entities/Managed Care Organizations (LME/MCOs) Tailored Plans and Standard Plans play a key role in Plan implementation.

Learn more about the landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling *Olmstead v L.C.*

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