

HB 918

Development and Implementation of the Olmstead Decision Report

Quarterly Update for the
Section B Interim Budget Committee

September 1, 2025



DEPARTMENT OF
**PUBLIC HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES**

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SUMMARY

Montana House Bill 922 (HB 922), passed during the 2023 legislative session, required the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) to create and implement a plan based on the principles of the Olmstead decision. This landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling requires states to provide services for people with disabilities in the most integrated, community-based settings possible.

Key provisions of HB 922 include:

- Developing a comprehensive plan that includes measurable goals for increased availability and access in order to ensure state-funded services for Montanans with disabilities are provided in a community setting whenever possible.
- Consulting with stakeholders, including the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), and providing regular opportunities for public input.
- Including an analysis of the department's current efforts, an overview of available services, and an assessment of the system's strengths and weaknesses.
- Requiring DPHHS to review the plan by June 30, 2029, and every six years thereafter, to ensure it remains consistent with the Olmstead decision.

Additionally, Montana House Bill 918 (HB 918) from the 2025 legislative session requires DPHHS to provide regular reports to the Health and Human Services Budget Committee during the legislative interim. These reports must detail the Department's efforts to develop and implement the plan for integrating individuals with disabilities into community-based settings, in compliance with the *Olmstead v. L.C.* Supreme Court decision.

OLMSTEAD PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND TIMELINE

DPHHS contracted with the Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities at the University of Montana to assess Montana's current efforts and develop the Olmstead Plan as required by HB 922. The project has followed a comprehensive timeline of activities, from initial stakeholder engagement to data analysis and goal formulation.

April – August 2024: The project began with a kick-off meeting for state and community partners, followed by a consensus-building workshop with the SILC to identify priority populations for focus groups. The team submitted and received an Institutional Review Board (IRB) exemption, created a plain-language document explaining the Olmstead decision, and began collecting data from DPHHS on service provision and costs.

September – November 2024: The team successfully recruited for and hosted 23 geographically diverse focus groups. Participants included people with disabilities, their family members and caregivers, and representatives from statewide advocacy groups.

December 2024 – February 2025: Six interviews were conducted with people with disabilities who had transitioned from institutional settings to more independent living. The team completed a full analysis of all focus group and interview data and drafted resolutions to seek permission from all seven tribal councils in Montana to interview disability service providers on each reservation.

March – May 2025: Three provider focus groups were conducted, which included individuals serving people with disabilities and the general public. The team presented to all seven tribal councils, seeking permission for tribal interviews.

June – July 2025: A full-day DPHHS key stakeholder meeting was hosted, where data was presented and Olmstead goals and objectives were refined. Tribal IRB submissions were made, and information from all data sources was organized into a draft goals-and-objectives document. The team also prepared data dashboards that included maps, charts, and graphs to display the data visually.

NEXT STEPS AND COLLABORATION

The next steps focus on finalizing the draft plan and preparing for public and legislative committee review.

- DPHHS leadership and other key state employees will review objectives before the draft plan is opened for public feedback in early fall 2025.
- The Rural Institute will evaluate and integrate information from the tribal interviews into the plan.
- The knowledge translation team will convert the data and recommendations into plain language, accessible documents for widespread dissemination.
- The Rural Institute continues to meet regularly with the SILC to gather feedback and support their efforts to engage additional state departments.
- The SILC has made it a key ongoing goal to collaborate with state departments beyond DPHHS to advance the Olmstead Plan through legislative action in the 2027 session.