HB 918 Development and Implementation of the Olmstead Decision Report

Final Quarterly Update for the Section B Interim Budget Committee

SEPT. 15, 2026

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES

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SUMMARY

This report is submitted in accordance with House Bill 918 (HB 918), which requires the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) to provide regular updates on the development and implementation of Montana's Olmstead Plan.

The Olmstead Plan is required under House Bill 922 (HB 922), passed by the 2023 legislative session, which directs DPHHS to develop and implement a plan consistent with the Olmstead v. L.C. decision to ensure services are provided in the most integrated, community-based settings possible.

Key provisions of HB 922 (Olmstead Plan requirements) include:

- Developing a comprehensive plan that includes measurable goals to increase availability and access and ensure state-funded services for Montanans with disabilities are provided in community-based settings 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.

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 followed a comprehensive timeline of activities, including stakeholder engagement, data collection and analysis, and development of goals and objectives.

April – Aug. 2024: The project commenced with a kickoff 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.

Sept. – Nov. 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.

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

Mar. – 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, during which data were 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 visually display the data.

Aug. – Dec. 2025: The project team finalized six priority goals and crafted objectives and activities in partnership with the Rural Institute, incorporating feedback from stakeholders, DPHHS employees, and leadership staff. Goals and objectives were presented to the Departments of Transportation and Commerce in preparation for a public feedback period. Beginning Dec. 8, the draft plan was released for a 30-day public comment period, accompanied by a virtual Town Hall on Dec. 19. Comments collected during this period will be analyzed for inclusion in the current plan or future iterations.

Jan. – Mar. 2026: The project team integrated the public feedback provided by 81 survey recipients and shared the information with DPHHS and the SILC. Based on the feedback, two new activities were added to the plan, and one activity was modified. With finalized goals, objectives, and activities, the project team developed a comprehensive quality assurance and monitoring plan, which was provided to DPHHS at the end of February. A detailed plan narrative was provided for review at the beginning of March, and a plain-language version of the plan is being finalized for dissemination. If necessary, the Department will work with the Rural Institute to extend the projected timeline and ensure the plans mentioned above are finalized.

Apr. - June 2026: To allow enough time for review, finalization, and statewide dissemination of a comprehensive Olmstead Plan, DPHHS extended the project through

June 30, 2026. During this period, the Rural Institute continued to work with DPHHS to integrate feedback from key staff and administrators into the completed plan, finalize information for the state-developed evaluation plan, and coordinate warm hand-offs with identified staff responsible for continuing implementation.

July – Sept. 2026: Following the formal extension, the comprehensive Olmstead Plan was finalized and successfully disseminated. To ensure ongoing public transparency, the Department launched a dedicated Olmstead website to house the final report and serve as a regular portal for progress updates. DPHHS assigned a temporary Olmstead coordinator to oversee initial activity implementation while a long-term plan to secure a permanent, full-time coordinator is developed. Additionally, in alignment with the plan's recommendations, an interagency kickoff meeting occurred between DPHHS, the Department of Commerce, and the Department of Transportation on Aug. 25 to establish enhanced cross-departmental collaboration.

NEXT STEPS AND COLLABORATION

DPHHS and the interim Olmstead coordinator are reviewing the monitoring framework to begin tracking progress on the Montana Olmstead Plan. As part of this work, DPHHS is exploring opportunities for formal interagency collaboration with the Department of Commerce and the Department of Transportation following their initial kickoff meeting on Aug. 25.

Moving forward, the temporary coordinator will focus on managing immediate, cost-neutral recommendations that do not require additional funding, while simultaneously partnering with the SILC to develop a sustainable, long-term strategy. Additionally, DPHHS is evaluating the feasibility of implementing a public progress dashboard on the new website to keep stakeholders informed as activities evolve.