

# **2017-06-01 16.13 MA Olmstead Stakeholder Outreach Webinar**

PRESENTER: Hello, and welcome to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts webinar on Massachusetts Olmstead Planning. We as a commonwealth are eager to have stakeholder engagement and input into our Olmstead planning process. And this webinar is intended to give stakeholders a preview of what this process will look like and the many ways in which you have an opportunity for engagement and input. So I'd like to begin by just describing a little bit about what an Olmsted Plan is, and what the Olmstead planning process entails.

So what is an Olmsted Plan? In 1999, the United States Supreme Court rendered a decision in Olmstead versus LC, a case that indicated that states have a legal obligation to administer programs and activities in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of qualified individuals with disabilities. The Olmstead decision, and subsequent department of justice guidance, recognized that a state may satisfy this obligation through development of a comprehensive effective working plan for placing qualified persons with disabilities in less restrictive setting. These plans are known as Olmsted Plans.

Why is the Commonwealth updating its Olmstead Plan now? The Commonwealth's current Olmsted Plan was finalized in 2008. If you go to slide 3 in this webinar, you'll see that there is a link to the Commonwealth's current Olmstead Plan. We will update the Olmsted Plan to include recommendations to improve and highlight the important integration work that has been done over the past eight years, such as reducing the number of state schools, reducing the number of state hospital beds, closing sheltered workshops, and expanding capacity for services and supports that allow individuals who have disabilities to live, work, and spend leisure time in settings that are integrated into the community. The Commonwealth is committed to updating the plan to include time frames and a multi-year roadmap to identify and address the need for additional community-based housing and services.

Who is leading this process? We have formed an Olmsted Planning Committee with representatives from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, EOHHS, and its constituent agencies, The Department of Housing and Community Development, DHCD, and the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency, Mass Housing. These agencies will guide the review and development of the new Olmsted Plan. The Olmstead Planning Committee is co-chaired by the executive director of the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness, ICHH, and the chief counsel of DHCD, and contains representatives from various state agencies. The Olmsted Planning Committee, in turn, will work with the Undersecretary of Health, the Undersecretary of Human Services, the Undersecretary of DHCD, and the executive director of the ICHH, and others throughout the development review and relief of the Commonwealth Olmsted Plan. Since Olmstead planning is a state obligation, the Olmstead Planning Committee will be the developers and final authors of the revised Commonwealth Olmsted Plan.

What are the common features of an Olmsted Plan? Among other things, a typical Olmstead Plan will describe the state's current system of providing community-based services and supports to people with disabilities, assess the strengths and weaknesses of that system, and describe the

state's plan and goals for expanding opportunities for providing community-based services and supports to people with disabilities.

Commonwealth recognizes the critical importance of stakeholder engagement in the Olmsted planning process. There are two key elements to this, input and transparency. In terms of input, we look to stakeholders to help us identify what's working, identify barriers, perceived barriers, and needs, and identify and prioritize potential solutions to overcome barriers and needs. By the same token, stakeholder engagement serves the important purpose of transparency. We want to ensure not only that draft plans include input from stakeholders, but also that they are available for public review and comment.

We are seeking active and collective engagement to develop the plan and also hope that the planning process will provide the opportunity to build support for the goals of the plan. There will be quite a number of opportunities for stakeholder input during the planning process. These include the creation of an Olmsted Advisory Council, work with existing statewide and regional groups, stakeholder meetings, listening sessions, and online input and feedback.

The Commonwealth, through the Olmsted Planning Committee, will establish an advisory council, with a target membership of 30 to 40 members, with subject matter expertise to assist in developing the Commonwealth Olmsted Plan. The roles and responsibilities of the Olmsted Advisory Council may include providing relevant factual background data and opinions, including representing other interested stakeholders, relating to the development of an updated Olmsted Plan, reviewing and suggesting edits to the content of draft Olmsted Plans, and identifying gaps and challenges in draft plans and providing recommendation. The membership of the Olmstead Advisory Council will be determined through a process known as an RFR, Request For Responses, to balance experience, expertise, geography, roles within the system, disabilities, and age groups represented.

Throughout this process, staff from state agencies will join with stakeholder groups to provide additional opportunities for input to the plan and subsequently to review, respond, and react to the draft Olmstead Plan before it is completed. We look forward to engaging with stakeholder groups through initial meetings that are designed to identify the strengths of the existing system, that promote community integration, barriers to accessing housing services and supports, and recommended improvements to systems of housing, services, and supports, it means to promote opportunities for community inclusion. These initial meetings will be primarily to engage stakeholders in the planning process and to identify the many means for continued participation in the process. We also anticipate having follow-up sessions, during which stakeholders will provide feedback on the draft plan itself. We will also hold community-based meetings, inviting broad-based stakeholder attendance, to provide state agency leadership with opportunities to hear directly from constituents. Attendees will be asked to identify strengths of the existing system, to promote community integration, barriers to accessing housing services and supports, and recommended improvements to systems of housing services and supports, and means to provide opportunities for community inclusion.

The Commonwealth has established a web page to facilitate ongoing input into the Olmstead planning process. Some of the information contained in this webinar is set forth on the web page.

If you are looking at the PowerPoint connected to this webinar there, is a direct link to the web page. You can also access it by using your web browser and searching for Massachusetts Olmsted Planning Committee.

On slide 11 of the PowerPoint, you'll see that the web page consists of a series of sub pages. There's an overview of the Olmstead planning process, a description of the Olmstead Planning Committee and the advisory council, a page for stakeholder engagement, and ultimately, the web page will include plan development materials and information about the feedback that we've received from stakeholders. On page 12, you will see the plan development materials and feedback page, which currently includes an opportunity for stakeholders to add contact information to our Olmstead planning listserv, which we will use to update interested parties on various elements of the planning process, including when materials are posted for comments. If you would like to be added to the listserv, please add your contact information. You may opt out at any time.

We will be soliciting stakeholder input in various ways at different phases of the Olmsted planning process. The first phase is information gathering, during which state agencies will engage in data collection, will hold broad listening sessions, and will reach out to existing stakeholder groups through their listserves an existing meetings. In phase two, the initial plan will be drafted, and then in phase three, we will again solicit stakeholder input by making drafts of the plan available, revising it based on feedback, holding additional listening sessions, and again, reaching out to stakeholder groups through existing meetings. In summary, the proposed activities for the Olmsted Plan will include consulting with agencies for plan development, establishing the Olmsted Planning Advisory Council, having state agency committee members attend meetings of existing formalized stakeholder groups, holding broad-based stakeholder listening sessions, providing opportunities for stakeholder feedback in written form to be synthesized and analyzed for common themes, unique needs, and innovative solutions, and also including in that synthesis and analysis the information derived from the stakeholder listening sessions, incorporating that feedback into our draft Olmstead Plan update, making the draft plan available for public comment, and again incorporating public comments into the plan before the final updated Olmsted Plan is promulgated.

We are particularly interested in receiving stakeholder input in response to a series of questions. The first is, in your opinion, which portions of the existing housing and services systems best contribute to enabling individuals with disabilities to integrate into and live successfully in the communities of their choice. It's important to state agencies crafting this plan to understand from the perspective of our constituents and other stakeholders what is working best so that we can build on that success. The second question is, in your opinion, what types of services and supports best allow or assist individuals with disabilities to participate in daily activities and employment settings that are integrated into the community. Again, your input into what's working best is an important guide to us in building on our existing programs.

Do you believe that there are barriers that prevent or limit some individuals with disabilities from integrating into and living successfully in the communities of their choice? We are interested in receiving your feedback on what those barriers may be, as well as your ideas on how to overcome them. So in question four, we wish to receive your input on the following. Do you

believe that the service and support systems in the Commonwealth should be changed in order to promote and increase opportunities for community inclusion for people with disabilities? If so, how, and if you had to prioritize, which would be the most important? That concludes our webinar. We look forward to receiving your stakeholder input.