

# Supplemental Handout for April 26, 2021 Olmstead Subcabinet Meeting

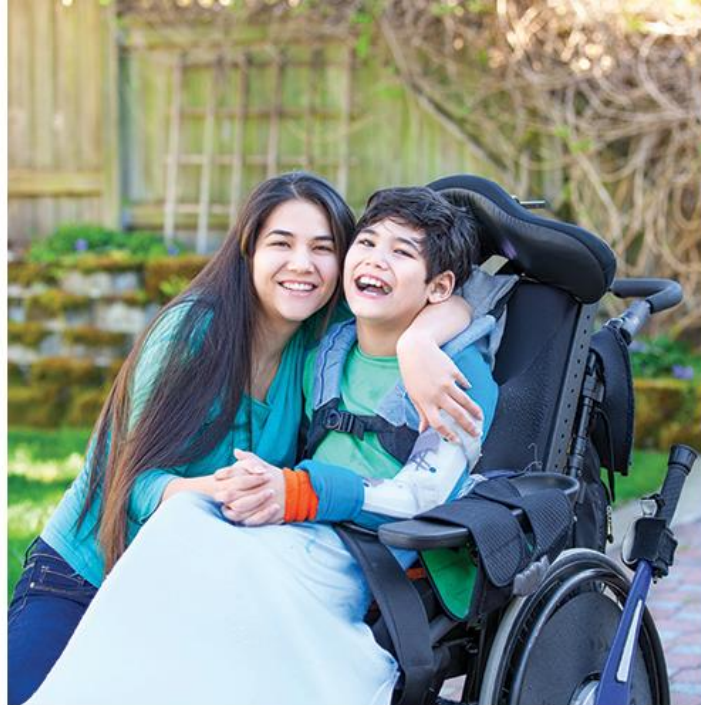
This supplemental handout includes meeting materials for

## **Agenda item 6a - Quality of Life Survey findings, recommendations and discussion**

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# Quality of Life Survey Recommendations

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[mn.gov/olmstead](https://mn.gov/olmstead)

# What is the Quality of Life Survey?

The Olmstead Quality of Life Survey tracks and evaluates the quality of life for people with disabilities who receive services in potentially segregated settings. The purpose of the survey is to ask Minnesotans with disabilities: "What affects your quality of life?"

# How do we measure a person's Quality of Life?

Participants rated 14 areas of their quality of life, from food, to relationships, to their health. The scale ranged from “very bad” to “very good.” The survey did not define “bad” or “good.” It allowed participants to draw on their own beliefs and experiences in their responses.

*The 14 areas covered in the survey were the most common responses in studies asking over 1 million people worldwide what is important to them and gives value to their lives.*

# Where can I learn more?

Visit the MN Olmstead Implementation  
Office website at [mn.gov/olmstead](https://mn.gov/olmstead)

Click on the Quality of Life Survey

# BIPOC Community Results

The Subcabinet has been interested in the intersectionality of race and disability. Racism at many levels affects equity in public systems, from individual to structural, and this is compounded for BIPOC people with disabilities.

On average, BIPOC participants reported lower scores than white participants, with Black and multiracial participants reporting consistently lower scores.

While there were small increases in quality of life for most participants, Black participants' scores declined in the second follow up.

# Participants

**Table 1: One in five survey participants is Black, Indigenous, and/or a Person of Color.**

Race/ethnicity	Number of participants	Percent
American Indian/Alaska Native	23	4.1%
Asian	15	2.7%
Black/African American	39	6.9%
Hispanic/Latino	9	1.6%
Multiracial/mixed race	16	2.8%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (not reported in findings by race/ethnicity)	1	0.2%
White	451	80.2%
Race not provided (not reported in findings by race/ethnicity)	7	1.2%

Participants included one Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander person. This person's data is not reported in findings disaggregated by race/ethnicity to honor our commitment to confidentiality. This person's results are included in the full data.



# Olmstead Quality of Life Second Follow-up Survey

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As with all aspects of quality of life, the findings in this study are interconnected. We have identified three findings that require the Subcabinet's immediate attention. We believe addressing these findings will have ripple effects on the findings related to outings, relationships, and formal activities. Our conversation today will focus on these three findings.

# Review policies that affect people's decision-making

The lack of decision-making power impacts all aspects of people's lives, including relationships, employment and education, and social activities.

Minnesota has developed plans to give people more choice and voice in how public dollars are used to support them. However, bureaucratic and resource constraints mean these plans are not consistently implemented or available.

# Improve enforcement of access to technology in potentially segregated settings

Provider-imposed restrictions on technology access, including access to the internet, affect people's relationships, access to work, school, and social activities, and safety.

Additionally, the State needs to revise minimum technology access requirements to include universal access to the internet.

# Strengthen systems that track where people access services

The State has a responsibility to keep people who access services safe and to communicate safety concerns to people and their guardians.

The Governor has asked for increased interaction and collaboration between State agencies. Successful collaboration requires data sharing agreements between agencies and data systems that can interact with each other.

# Questions to Ask

How can we use these results and recommendations to make meaningful changes in services and supports to impact people's quality of life?

How can we use this information to strengthen the Olmstead Plan and the agencies' action plans?

# Next Steps?

Individual agency questions are included in your packet that address the recommendations made. These questions are meant to encourage more conversation in your agencies.

The Leadership Forum may be the best place to begin work on these recommendations.



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# Thank You!

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**Executive summary: Olmstead Quality of Life Second Follow-up – 2020**

The Olmstead Quality of Life Survey measures quality of life over time for a specific population in Minnesota: people who access services in potentially segregated settings. This report summarizes findings from the Olmstead Quality of Life Second Follow-up – 2020 and compares these results to quality of life in 2017 and 2018. The findings are based on data from 561 surveys administered between August 2020 and February 2021. COVID-19's influence on the data is described below.

These findings can help the State of Minnesota assess what is working and where renewed efforts under Minnesota's Olmstead Plan are needed. This process is important because **the needle on quality of life has not moved since 2017**, despite millions of dollars in investments and well-intentioned initiatives. In many areas, this data indicates a continued decline in integration that the State must reverse. The below recommendations suggest key areas for improvement.

**Focus on shifting decision-making power to people.**

Overall, participants had the same amount of power over decisions that affect them as in previous years. On average, paid staff made big decisions. These could include choosing a participant's case manager, housemates, and the amount of time they spend at work or a day program. Participants with public guardians had less decision-making control and less integration on their outings than those with no guardian or a private (usually family) guardian. These findings show the State must **review policies that affect people's decision-making and set new or revised Olmstead Plan goals to increase people's control over decisions.**

**Focus on increasing outings and relationships.**

We cannot ignore COVID-19's effects on survey findings. At the same time, we know from the 2017 and 2018 surveys that the pandemic is not the only factor that has stalled progress. Previous surveys show that segregation was a problem before the pandemic disrupted day programs and social opportunities. For example, the 2018 survey showed declines in participants' outings and relationships long before COVID-19 started. The State should **strengthen policies affecting people's outings and relationships and set new or revised Olmstead Plan goals to increase people's outings and relationships.** The current Olmstead Plan goals do not reference relationships.

In some instances, participants shared how providers and staff enforcing COVID-19 restrictions lowered their quality of life. We must document these impacts because this may be the only statewide survey that captured the experiences of people with disabilities in Minnesota during

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the pandemic. It can help to **restore the relationships, freedoms, and other aspects of quality of life that have eroded during the pandemic**. It can also document lessons for future pandemics.

### **Invest in expanding the menu of formal activities like work, day programs, and school.**

The number of participants taking part in formal activities such as work, day programs, and school fell sharply. Imagine a rural community only has one day program. The fewer choices a person in that community has, the more COVID-19 shutdowns can disparately affect them. This reinforces the well-established need for a wide range of options for work and engagement. The pandemic just made that need clearer. The State should **focus efforts and investments on expanding the options available to people who choose to work, go to day programs, and attend school**.

### **Ensure access to technology.**

Participants engaged with their communities far less during COVID-19. Only some could turn to the internet in place of in-person activities. This is partly because access to the technology required to join online events is not universal. The survey did not ask whether participants had access to the internet, but 84 percent took it by phone rather than video call. Note that the survey team could only use platforms approved by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) Institutional Review Board. It did not allow Zoom until December 2020. That also affected who used video because participants were hesitant about unfamiliar platforms. This is an example of how a State restriction, while grounded in data privacy concerns, had the unfortunate consequence of removing choice.

Interviewer observations also point to the need for better access to technology. In one case, a participant could not take the survey themselves because they could not use the setting's house phone while quarantined. In this way, the pandemic showed that while providers may comply with minimum technology access requirements, that access is restricted.

This points to the need to **improve enforcement of existing minimum technology requirements in potentially segregated settings**. For example, one state law requires that 245D-licensed settings ensure "daily, private access to and use of a non-coin-operated telephone for local calls and long-distance calls." Additionally, the State needs to **revise minimum technology access requirements to keep up with the times**. The right to freely access the internet, with reasonable limitations for safety concerns and resident-developed house rules, should be universal for people with disabilities. This includes people in potentially segregated settings, whose internet access may be at the mercy of staff where they live or work. The current Olmstead Plan lacks goals around this type of access to technology.

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### Expand the focus population of the Olmstead Quality of Life Survey.

This report provides helpful data on the experiences of a specific population in Minnesota—people who access services in potentially segregated settings. Specifically, participants in the survey were drawn from the population of people who accessed these services when data collection began in 2016. But many people who benefit from the Olmstead Plan are not included. As more people move to more integrated settings, different factors affect their quality of life. For example, shortages of Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) can affect people living independently. Survey data shows an increase in decision-making power when people move to integrated settings, but a lack of improvement in other measures of quality of life. This points to the need to **broaden the focus population of this survey to understand the experiences of people with disabilities in Minnesota at different stages of integration.**

### Learn from adaptations.

In some cases, people and providers responded to COVID-19 with creativity and innovation. For one participant, Special Olympics, glee club, dance club, and equine therapy all changed formats for safety during the pandemic. The State should learn from and build on successful cases of adapting programming to online and other socially distant formats. Scaling up these types of solutions could increase quality of life in general, not just during a pandemic. The State should **invest in research to document these successes. It should also fund their expansion, such as through DHS innovation grants.**

### Improve data-tracking systems.

The survey team experienced challenges with the State's data systems that people with disabilities who access public services likely share. The survey team frequently observed outdated data that did not reflect someone's death or change in services. In other cases, guardianship information was not updated or contact information for settings was wrong. The State has a responsibility to keep people who access services safe and provide services in the most integrated setting. Yet, the survey team noticed several discrepancies in the data on where people access services. Without knowing where people are, the State will have difficulty ensuring people's safety. The State should **strengthen systems that track where people access services and how to contact them and the people who support them.**

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**Olmstead Quality of Life Second Follow-up Survey****Key recommendations**

As with all aspects of quality of life, the findings in this study are interconnected. We have identified three findings that require the Subcabinet's immediate attention. We believe addressing these findings will have ripple effects on the findings related to outings, relationships, and formal activities. Our conversation today will focus on these three findings.

**The State must review policies that affect people's decision-making and set new or revised Olmstead Plan goals to increase people's control over decisions.**

- Participants had the same amount of power over decisions that affect them as in previous years. Paid staff make big decisions like choosing a participant's case manager, housemates, and the amount of time they spend at work or a day program.
- The lack of decision-making power impacts all aspects of people's lives, including relationships, employment and education, and social activities.
- Minnesota has developed plans to give people more choice and voice in how public dollars are used to support them. However, bureaucratic and resource constraints mean these plans are not consistently implemented or available.

**The State must improve enforcement of existing minimum technology requirements in potentially segregated settings. Additionally, the State needs to revise minimum technology access requirements to include universal access to the internet.**

- Provider-imposed restrictions on technology access, including access to the internet, affect people's relationships, access to work, school, and social activities, and safety.
- Early this month, DHS reported a decline in vulnerable adult maltreatment reports in 2020. It is reasonable to assume that some of this decline is because people do not have unrestricted and private access to technology.

**The State should strengthen systems that track where people access services and how to contact them and the people who support them.**

- The State has a responsibility to keep people who access services safe and to communicate safety concerns to people and their guardians.
- The Governor has asked for increased interaction and collaboration between State agencies. Successful collaboration requires data sharing agreements between agencies and data systems that can interact with each other

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**[AGENDA ITEM 6a]****Prompts for Subcabinet members**

The following are key questions for Subcabinet members and agencies to consider when reviewing and discussing the results.

	<b>Decision-making</b>	<b>Access to technology</b>	<b>Data systems</b>
Corrections (DOC)		How can new DOC policies on access to technology inform revisions to minimum access to technology requirements for people with disabilities?	Do we have data on the number of people with disabilities who are in prison? What is being done to assess individuals with disabilities currently?
Education (MDE)	<p>In what ways are funding formulas increasing the decision-making power of students with disabilities or family members with disabilities?</p> <p>Can parents with disabilities access education for their children in the same way that other parents can? For example, is there an assumption that parents can participate in zoom conferences?</p> <p>In what ways are policies developed and enforced that allow students and their families the most choice in where and how to access education services?</p>	<p>Is high-speed internet access equally available across all school systems?</p> <p>Are students with disabilities' preferences and needs prioritized when selecting and rolling out devices to students?</p>	For individuals with disabilities who were participating in job readiness programs under their IEP, and lost access to those programs because of the pandemic, what is your plan to address the needs of young adults who needed those services to be ready for employment?

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	<b>Decision-making</b>	<b>Access to technology</b>	<b>Data systems</b>
Employment and Economic Development (DEED)	Access to community-based employment has been a challenge for some time, what plans are available to assist individuals to access such employment options?		<p>What do you anticipate will happen coming out of the pandemic in gaining back jobs for people with disabilities? What are some of DEED's plans for recovery?</p> <p>How can we leverage changes in employment, such as work from home policies, to increase access to meaningful employment for people with disabilities?</p>
Health (MDH)	Mental health was affected—has MDH been studying the importance of social emotional connections? What are your recommendations?		How was information delivered to individuals with low or no reading skills on the impact of their health, need for PPE, and other safety precautions during the pandemic? What is the plan to remedy this issue?
Human Rights (MDHR)			How can improved data systems and integrations between data systems help us achieve our equity goals?



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	<b>Decision-making</b>	<b>Access to technology</b>	<b>Data systems</b>
Human Services (DHS)	<p>What initiatives are underway to shift power to the people and from counties or providers?</p> <p>How has community feedback shaped these initiatives?</p>	<p>Given the reliance on technology for governmental services, businesses, social service agencies, the courts, the legislature, and other community/social organizations, how can DHS leverage existing policies to ensure that people with disabilities are guaranteed access to computers, tablets, cell phones or minimally landline telephones moving forward?</p>	<p>Are there any reporting mechanisms that allow an individual to make a complaint about a vulnerable adult without the use of a telephone or other piece of technology? Is this information made available to all individuals who live in segregated settings and their allies?</p> <p>What mechanisms are in place to protect vulnerable adults when they do not have regular access to mandated reporters, family, or others who might recognize the abuse?</p>
Housing (MHFA)	<p>How do existing housing policies affect access to housing in the community?</p>		<p>Do we know the number of individuals who live in segregated settings, who wish to receive housing vouchers, are waiting to receive access to those programs? Do we know the number of people with disabilities who require housing?</p>
Public Safety (DPS)			<p>Do we know the number of people with disabilities who have encounters with police?</p>

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	<b>Decision-making</b>	<b>Access to technology</b>	<b>Data systems</b>
Transportation (MnDOT)	<p>How can changes to the transportation system impact people's access to the types of jobs and housing they choose?</p> <p>In what ways are MnDOT's funding priorities supporting decision making power for people with disabilities (vs. funding priorities that continue to enable people with no barriers to decision-making to exercise their decisions)?</p> <p>In what ways are MnDOT policies supporting choice, and is MnDOT enforcing these policies? (for example, are curb cuts, local access roads, etc. being funded, built and maintained in a way that enables people to move freely and exercise choice?</p> <p>Are State contracting processes with construction/PT companies increasing access for people with disabilities to access the jobs that they most want to access? Is MnDOT itself hiring people with disabilities?</p>	<p>Is high-speed internet access equally available across all types of transit?</p> <p>Is high-speed internet access required to access transportation services, like transit schedules?</p>	<p>How can MNDOT work with other agencies to ensure that new regular route planning meets the needs of individuals across the state (urban, rural, and suburban) to access employment and leisure activities?</p>

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	<b>Decision-making</b>	<b>Access to technology</b>	<b>Data systems</b>
Veterans Affairs (MDVA)	How can strategies and lessons learned in addressing MDVA priorities such as addressing veteran suicide apply to improving quality of life for people with disabilities?	How can policies related to technology access in Veterans' Homes inform minimum access to technology requirements for people with disabilities?	
Metropolitan Council (Met Council)			How can Met Council address the need for consistent, independent, and reliable transit routes for people with disabilities?
Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD)	How do we ensure we are funding inclusive and generic opportunities? (e.g., general opportunities for physical activity or community-based enrichment opportunities)		
Office of the Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (OMHDD)	OMHDD—can you describe any new developments such as supported decision-making that will shift power from guardians. Are there specific complaints that your office receives that point to new solutions about guardians?		