

HISTORY NOTE: Looking at the past and the future provides important perspectives

by [Access Press Staff](#) // July 9th, 2018

The Minnesota Governor's Council on Development Disabilities (MN-GCDD) continues its work to preserve the state's disability history. The latest effort, which was unveiled in June, is *With an Eye to the Future*.

This important online archive is a follow-up to *With an Eye to the Past*, which summarized 50 years of history. It was first presented in 2001, as part of an important commemoration. On February 1, 2001 the council hosted a luncheon to celebrate a big milestone. That was when the last resident with developmental disabilities left the Regional Treatment Center system.

[*With an Eye to the Past*](#) was converted to a website feature. It includes historical documents, video interviews, and slide shows and presents a detailed look back at the days of regional centers.

The first state hospital in Minnesota opened at St. Peter in 1866, for people with mental illness. The first state school for people with developmental disabilities opened in Faribault in 1881. These and other facilities were tied to a social reform movement which linked the therapeutic concept of "asylum" with the good of society. Peaceful rural settings were seen as providing treatment and shelter in a bucolic setting, while shielding the rest of society. But as thinking changed, the regional treatment center approach evolved. That was later replaced by the push to instead keep people with disabilities in their home communities.

While *With an Eye to the Past* contains much valuable history gleaned from more than 130 years' worth of paper documents, much has changed in less than two decades. One is how the state's legislative reference library preserves its records, focusing on keeping accessible digital copies of important documents.

Other key changes affect everyday lives. One important document file is the Jensen case. James and Lori Jensen on behalf of their son, Bradley J. Jensen, joined forces with James Brinker and Darren Allen on behalf of their son, Thomas Allbrink, and Elizabeth Jacobs on behalf of her son, Jason Jacobs. The families sued the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Cambridge-based Minnesota Extended Treatment Options (METO) program and METO leadership over maltreatment of residents with developmental disabilities. It was alleged that METO residents were unlawfully and unconstitutionally secluded and restrained. The new files contain everything from the original complaint filed in 2009 to the completed settlement agreement, which won judicial approval in December 2011.

A second section is on the Olmstead Plan, which was set into motion by the settlement over METO. Minnesota has moved ahead with its Olmstead Plan, which guides the state as it works to include people with disabilities in their home communities. That documentation is also online.

Another section is on mandated legislative reports. These cover a broad range of issues including vulnerable adults, quality assurance, health equity, prevention of abuse and neglect, positive supports, community-based services, Individualized Education Programs, Medicaid spending and waivers, quality of life, transportation and everything in between.

A grant allowed the council to add more than 750 documents and 20 videos to the ongoing archive. It can be found at www.mncdd.org

Access Press is interested in reader submissions for the monthly History Note column, to complement the articles written by Luther Granquist and other contributors. Submissions must center on events, people and places in the history of Minnesota's disability community. We are interested in history that focuses on all types of disability topics, so long as the history has a tie to Minnesota. We are especially interested in stories from Greater Minnesota. Please submit ideas prior to submitting full stories, as we may have covered the topic before. Contact us at access@accesspress.org or 651-644-2133 if you have questions. The History Note is a monthly column sponsored by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities.