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Latest survey measures quality of life for Minnesotans with disabilities

St. Paul, Minn. –

As part of its effort to enable people with disabilities to choose where and how they live, learn, work and enjoy life, the State of Minnesota measures their quality of life over time. The [2020 Olmstead Quality of Life Survey report](#) indicates where people are doing well, what needs improvement and the impact of COVID-19 on individual's experiences this year.

The survey, conducted by The Improve Group, gathered input from people with disabilities who receive services in potentially segregated settings. A segregated setting is a residence, school, workplace or social activity meant to include only people with disabilities. Segregated settings often have rules or protocols that do not allow people to make basic life choices such as what to eat, when to go to bed, where to work, how to spend their time or who to socialize with. Lack of access to the Internet, a computer or even a telephone can further isolate people.

The 2020 Olmstead Quality of Life Survey report compares results with past surveys beginning in 2017. The report recommends that the State do the following to address five key areas in need of improvement:

- Continue to focus on shifting decision-making power to people.
- Find ways to increase the number of social outings and personal relationships enjoyed by people with disabilities.
- Invest in increasing options for work, school and other activities.
- Ensure access to technology for all.
- Improve data-tracking systems to ensure people are in a setting that best fits their needs and preferences.

In a year when all Minnesotans struggled with restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey showed many people with disabilities were disproportionately affected. Some were more isolated than ever due to a lack of access to online communication tools. Others felt that people without disabilities would finally understand the frustration and emotional toll of having little choice in many areas of their life.

As one survey participant said, "We have a mutual emergency to deal with. It's brought everyone into the same boat, common ground. It makes me feel more equal."

People who agree to be interviewed for the survey provide critical information for State Agency leaders and legislators to understand how to offer the best array of options for a diverse group of individuals.

"We appreciate hearing from those who were interviewed for this survey. Sharing their life experiences helps us understand how to improve options for all people with disabilities," said Minnesota Housing Commissioner Jennifer Ho, Chair of the Minnesota Olmstead Subcabinet.

The Minnesota Olmstead Plan strives for person-centered planning that allows individuals to choose where to live, learn, work and enjoy life according to their personal needs and preferences. The Plan's measurable goals are reviewed quarterly and amended as needed to help transition more people with disabilities to less restrictive settings.

"We are researching ways to implement the recommendations in the Quality of Life Survey report as we continue to build on the successes of the current Minnesota Olmstead Plan," said Human Services Commissioner Jodi Harpstead, one of 13 members of the Minnesota Olmstead Subcabinet.

The Minnesota Olmstead Subcabinet invites the public to comment on the report's conclusions and recommendations: [Comment on the Minnesota Olmstead Plan Quality of Life Survey report](#).

To learn about Minnesota's progress on the Olmstead Plan goals, and ways to get involved, [sign up for the Minnesota Olmstead News email list](#).

The Minnesota Olmstead Implementation Office collaborates with State agencies to make Minnesota a place where people with disabilities can live their best life. Find out more at mn.gov/olmstead.

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