

Spring 2026 Public Comment Summary: Disability Systems Change Council (DSCC)

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Introduction

This report shares findings from the spring 2026 public comment period on the draft Olmstead Plan. The public comment period sought feedback about proposed Olmstead Plan goals.

Draft Olmstead Plan background

The first Minnesota Olmstead Plan was adopted in 2015. In 2023, the Olmstead Subcabinet decided it was time for a more comprehensive update. For the plan update, OIO worked with a contractor called

Dendros Group. Dendros Group brought on people with lived experience of disability as Inclusion Consultants. Inclusion Consultants worked with state agency staff to write goals and strategies for the draft plan.

The draft plan included both measurable goals and data collection goals. Measurable goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). Measurable goals are the foundation of an effective Olmstead Plan. Data collection goals represent issues that agencies want to write goals about, but don't have the data to create a measurable goal yet. The draft plan grouped goals into seven topics:

- Crisis services
- Education
- Employment
- Health and safety
- Housing
- Transportation
- Transition

For more information about Olmstead, the 2026 plan drafting process, and to read the draft plan, please visit the OIO website: [MN.gov/olmstead](https://mn.gov/olmstead)

Public comment period background

The Olmstead Implementation Office (OIO) held the public comment period in partnership with the Dendros Group, Inclusion Consultants, and state staff. The public comment period took place in April and May 2026. It included:

- An online survey
- Virtual meetings and individual interviews
- Email comments and submissions from organizations

Online survey

The online survey was available in English, Spanish, Hmong, Somali, and American Sign Language (ASL).

Survey participants could choose which goal topics to share feedback about. They could also choose to give general feedback about topic areas overall, specific feedback about individual goals, or both. The survey was anonymous, and all questions were optional.

Survey questions

The survey asked the following questions about each topic area:

- Do you think reaching these goals will improve the lives of Minnesotans with disabilities? (multiple choice question)
- Are there any topics or issues you feel are missing from these goals? (comment box question)
- Do you have any general feedback about these goals? (comment box question)

The survey asked the following questions about each individual measurable goal:

- Do you think this is an important question for the lead state agency to address? (multiple choice question)
- This measurable goal is... (multiple choice question)
- Do you have any ideas of other strategies and action steps to reach this goal? (comment box question)
- Do you think reaching this goal will improve the lives of Minnesotans with disabilities? (multiple choice question)

For data collection goals, the survey asked, “Do you have any feedback about this goal?” with a comment box.

The survey also included optional demographic questions.

Virtual meetings and individual interviews

Dendros Group planned and implemented virtual meetings as part of the public comment period. Inclusion Consultants facilitated the meetings. Dendros held seven meetings, one for each topic in the plan. The meetings were intended to be an accessible alternative to the online survey. Registration was open to the public, and the meetings took place on Zoom.

Facilitators asked the following questions during virtual meetings:

- What would make these goals more effective to improve the lives of Minnesotans with disabilities?
- What would make these goals more effective to better integrate Minnesotans with disabilities in community life?
- What’s missing from these goals?

Dendros Group also offered individual interviews. The interviews were intended to be an accessible alternative to the survey and virtual meetings. Inclusion Consultants conducted the interviews.

Email comments and submissions from organizations

OIO also received public comments through email. These comments came from individuals and organizations.

Disability Systems Change Council (DSCC) overview

The draft Olmstead Plan proposed creating a Disability Systems Change Council (DSCC). The DSCC will plan and guide implementation of visionary and systemic changes. The council will address issues that require:

- More than five years of work
- Significant shifting of funding and resources, and/or new funding and resources
- Changes to state law and potentially federal law
- Strategic partnerships

The online survey asked, “What is one issue you think the DSCC should focus on?” The most common suggestions included:

- Streamlining and improving state systems
- Workforce issues
- Employment, benefits, and income

Disability Systems Change Council (DSCC) feedback

State systems

Participants said they want the DSCC to focus on state disability service systems. They described the current systems as fragmented, complex, and inaccessible. They suggested the DSCC work on streamlining and coordinating across disability services.

Quotes:

- “DSCC needs to remove the complexity and barriers to services, such as the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver. Thirty years ago, a simple DD screening was enough to get someone onto the DD waiver. Now, it is a highly complex and confusing process. It is too complex.”
- “The draft plan repeatedly emphasizes belonging, dignity, self-determination, authentic participation. But none of those are fully achievable if the system itself remains fragmented and exhausting to navigate. Even well-funded programs fail when systems are disconnected, people cannot access them, or supports collapse during transitions. Fragmentation is the infrastructure problem underneath nearly every other Olmstead issue.”
- “Many disability services are incomplete ... [and] fractured ... The programs were meant to help the vulnerable in our communities but since they are so uncoordinated, this leaves clients to fall through the cracks. This leaves people struggling to find and maintain supports. This leaves family members struggling to know if their loved ones are really better off in the system but also knowing they do not have the resources to do it alone.”

- “One issue the DSCC should focus on is enforceable accountability across all disability service systems. Right now, Minnesota has multiple programs, agencies, and coordination structures, but very little binding enforcement when systems fail – whether that's delayed services, inaccessible communication, institutional overuse, or benefit cliffs that force people into dependency tradeoffs. The DSCC should prioritize shifting from advisory and coordination models to enforceable standards that apply across agencies, with clear consequences when outcomes are not met.”

Workforce issues

Participants described the shortage of direct support professionals (DSPs) as a top issue for the DSCC to address. They also said staff need better training and resources.

Quotes:

- “The single most important issue the DSCC should focus on is the catastrophic failure of Minnesota's direct support and home care workforce system, because none of the other goals discussed in this plan are realistically achievable without stable staffing and actual service access.”
- “I encourage ecosystem coordination with the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and workforce development systems to create clearer DSP employment pathways, improve real-time workforce matching, and strengthen provider stability. Better alignment between workforce development, staffing coordination, and service delivery would support continuity of care and long-term Olmstead (North Star) integration goals.”
- “Minnesota is experiencing severe direct care workforce shortages that threaten the stability of the entire disability support system.”

Income and benefits

Participants said they want the DSCC to address income limits for services and benefits. They shared that these income limits make some people feel they must choose between having a job and keeping their benefits. They suggested this would allow people with disabilities to earn a livable income while maintaining benefits.

Quotes:

- “[People with disabilities] shouldn't lose any services or benefits because they start working, that is counter productive.”
- “Once people start earning a living wage, they may lose their benefit. This shouldn't happen to anyone. The system needs to change.”
- “Currently, the state's disability systems are built on a ‘Poverty-Mandate’ model. Disabled Minnesotans are forced into a ‘Feasibility Catch-22’ where they must remain poor to [keep their

benefits] but are encouraged to work in a 'capitalist productivity' model that eventually strips those benefits away once they earn a living wage."