

Winnipeg's Olmstead Plan Implementation

Summary Report: October 1 through December 31,
2023

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Background and Introduction

Targeted divisions and offices within the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), working with other state agencies, continue to further refine, in quarterly work plans, the high-level action steps and timeframes for completion necessary to implement the State's Olmstead Plan strategies. Staff continue to provide quarterly reports to capture progress with strategies and implementation activities. These inputs provide the foundation for measuring overall progress towards Plan implementation. This report accounts for *activity* during the fourth quarter, October 1 through December 31, of Plan Year Two, Calendar Year 2023; however, the *data* reported is typically for the previous quarter.

The Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC) reviewed each work plan, to clarify action steps as needed, and to capture challenges to Plan implementation. In addition, TAC continued to work with the NCDHHS and Mathematica, the lead contractor for identifying baseline data and targeted outcome measures for the 2022-2023 Plan. Work on this initial Plan will continue through to March 31, 2024, to allow sufficient time for development of the 2024 - 2025 Olmstead Plan. Prioritized initiatives and strategies in the next plan may call for alternative data points and targeted measures that differ from the limited data points and measures contained in the current plan; however, the Department is making progress in identifying data sets and is committed to incorporating expanded data analysis in the next plan.

The build-up of the community-based system, along with the transformation of services and supports to align with the Olmstead Plan, must continue for North Carolinians with disabilities to live as fully included members of their communities. We recognize and commend all staff, leadership, and the North Carolina General Assembly for the time, thought and resources they continue to invest into this process.

Status of Strategies

The following categories describe the status of Plan Strategies.

Complete: The strategy/all identified action steps were accomplished as of the end of the reporting period.

In Process: Staff were actively engaged in the strategy/at least one action step had been taken as of the end of the reporting period.

Not Started: Work related to the strategy/action step(s) was not underway as of the end of the reporting period.

Needs Revision/Clarification: The strategy *may* move forward with modification.

No Longer Under Consideration: The strategy is no longer active for Plan implementation.

Table 1, below, summarizes the progression of the Plan strategies from inception of the Plan in January 2022 through December 31, 2023. Since the last Quarterly Summary of Progress report, eleven strategies identified as “in process” were completed as reflected in the totals below.

Table 1. Plan Strategies/Action Steps Summary

Complete	In Process	Not Started	Needs Revision/ Clarification	No Longer Under Consideration
51	64	5	4	12

The NCDHHS will continue to report progress on remaining strategies and action steps through March 31, 2024. TAC is working with the Department to create a working draft of the 2024 - 2025 Olmstead Plan.

Highlights of Progress Achieved

The NCDHHS divisions reported additional progress with strategies during the fourth quarter of Plan Year Two implementation. Prior examples of progress achieved are not repeated below but can be found in the Quarterly Summary Reports previously released by the Department and posted on the NCDHHS Olmstead Plan site at <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/about/administrative-offices/office-secretary/nc-olmstead>. What follows are highlighted *examples* of progress achieved between October 1 and December 31, 2023.

Examples of Strategies and Action Steps Completed or In Process Between October 1 and December 31, 2023.

Priority Area #1: Strengthen Individuals’ and Families’ Choice for Community Inclusion through Increased Access to Home and Community Based Services and Supports

The Division of Health Benefits (DHB) completed development of an integrated, state waiting list database of people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD) and people with traumatic brain injury (TBI) for state-operated and state-funded services, along with Medicaid waiver-funded services. The database is the source of information for the [Local Management Entities/Managed Care Organizations’ \(LME/MCOs\) dashboard](#). The dashboard provides beneficial information about the demographics of people who require services and who may shift between programs. This database does not replace the Innovations Waiver Registry of Unmet Need, which will continue to be maintained by the LME/MCOs.

In addition, data on Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility usage by each LME/MCO is also available and can be tracked using the dashboard.

The DHB submitted a 1915(c) Innovations Waiver amendment to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to make certain flexibilities (known as “Appendix K flexibilities”) allowed by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) during the pandemic to become permanent revisions to the state’s Medicaid program. Approval of the amendment will afford individuals the ongoing opportunity to receive critical Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) that allow them to maintain their independence.

Priority Area #2: Address the Direct Support Professional (DSP) Crisis

Efforts undertaken by the Workforce Engagement with Care workers to Assist, Recognize and Educate (WECARE) initiative, funded by the Money Follows the Person (MFP) Program, continued with the goal of making recommendations regarding competency-based curricula for training direct service workers, including Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), across sectors. WECARE:

- Developed tailored interview questions for various demographics to conduct in-depth interviews, building on insights from listening sessions.
- Facilitated "Core Competencies Happy Hours" to identify areas needing emphasis and improvement, aligning the work with project and community needs.
- Continued to refine initial observations and translate them into actionable recommendations, aiming for a balance between pilot projects and systemic changes.

In the initial Olmstead Plan, the Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) set forth the goal to relieve stress on the frontline workforce by supporting a 20% increase in the number of seniors having increased access to assistive technology through the Aging and Disability Resource Center DAAS Assistive Technology Project. The DAAS exceeded this goal early in the plan’s implementation, yet continued to support access through the summer of 2023 until funds were exhausted. The strategy was completed and is now retired.

Priority Area #3: Divert and Transition Individuals from Unnecessary Institutional and Segregated Settings

On November 5, 2023, the Division of Social Services (DSS) released the unlicensed kinship program policy. It is intended to support additional opportunities for children and youth, including those with disabilities, to be diverted from placement in congregate care settings. The policy allows families who are not licensed as foster parents to receive a payment equal to half the board rate paid to licensed foster parents.

The Division of State Operated Healthcare Facilities (DSOHF) continued progress with a series of initiatives that promote transitions to the community from the State Developmental Centers, including:

- A second Olmstead Specialist was hired at the Murdoch State Developmental Center to support the transition process for people with Memorandum of Agreements (MOA) within the Center. The DSOHF hopes to fill the Olmstead Specialist position for the J. Iverson Riddle Center in 2024.
- The State Developmental Centers established a goal to offer education and training opportunities to community providers with the purpose of building community capacity. The DSOHF has been working with NC START to develop the training curriculum, materials, and dates for a training series to kick off mid-February 2024. One training session will be offered per month, for six months. Topics will include positive psychology, crisis prevention and intervention, understanding diagnoses, and building community providers' understanding of best practice resources and tools available to implement these practices.
- In September 2022, the State Developmental Centers set out to pilot a collaborative opportunity with community Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) providers with the purpose of sharing resources, building community capacity, and providing technical assistance and consultation. The ICF Provider Collaborative continues to meet, even after completing the intended objectives for the first year of the workgroup. The DSOHF hosted training opportunities with each Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organization (LME/MCO) for community ICF providers to gain an understanding of LME/MCO in-reach components.

Between August 1 and October 31, 2023, of the 132 Population 5¹ individuals screened eligible for Transitions to Community Living (TCL), only 12 individuals chose to enter an Adult Care Home. Staff of the Transitions to Community Living Team - Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services (TCL-DMH/DD/SUS) continue to monitor utilization of the Informed Decision Making (IDM) online learning module. Between January 1, 2022 and November 14, 2023, 289 individuals completed the IDM online learning module. The TCL-DMH/DD/SUS staff also continue to monitor utilization of the IDM tool for people with serious mental illness. To strengthen Certified Peer Support Specialists knowledge about informed choice and best practices for utilizing the IDM tool, staff facilitated six, in-person, role play sessions statewide from July 1 through October 31, 2023. Eighty-five TCL staff attended the sessions.

Priority Area #4: Increase Opportunities for Supported Education and Pre-Employment Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities, and Competitive Integrated Employment for Adults with Disabilities

The Division of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Substance Use Services (DMH/DD/SUS) recently concluded the first three years of the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Healthy Transitions grant, targeted for transition-age youth and young adults.² Participation in the grant facilitated over 50 internships for youth to build skills and job independence.

¹ Individuals diverted from entry into adult care homes pursuant to the pre-admission screening and diversion provisions of Section III(F) of the Settlement Agreement.

² A student with a disability, age 14 to 22, is eligible for transition services as part of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP), so long as that student is enrolled in a public school, which includes charter schools.

Existing providers continued expansion of Pre-Employment Transition Services into Gaston County, Bladen County, Caswell County, Onslow County, and Robeson County.

The Work Together NC Project, Administration for Community Living grant, achieved the following efforts targeted for youth employment:

- Formation of the Intellectual/ Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) Inclusive Employment Alliance. The Alliance offers opportunity for certification as an Inclusive Employer after completing a series of I/DD related training modules.

The Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE)/Project SPARK³ accomplishments included:

- Contracts with pilot sites were effective October 1, 2023. The pilot sites are Chatham Trades in Siler City, Wake Enterprises in Raleigh, and TriCounty Industries in Rocky Mount. Each site has initiated recruitment of staff. Each held kick off events to discuss program planning and needs. Training for pilot site staff and outreach materials have been developed.
- Pilot sites and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) field staff completed training on customized employment incentive milestones. Pilot sites began providing customized employment to SWTCIE/Project SPARK participants effective October 2023.
- On December 15, 2023 the DMH/DD/SUS posted service definitions for Job Retention Services (I/DD) and Community Engagement Options (I/DD)⁴ with an implementation date of March 1, 2024.

In August, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) began a phased deployment of a new case management system known as ENCORE (Electronic Network Centered on Rehabilitation Effectiveness). The Division will provide updated data reflecting its progress when the transition is completed.

Priority Area #5: Increase Opportunities for Inclusive Community Living

The NCDHHS has continued, with consultation and support from the Technical Assistance Collaborative's (TAC) Housing Team, to advance the draft Strategic Housing Plan. TAC has continued working with the Housing Leadership group to develop a one-year action plan to guide implementation of the Housing Plan in 2024.

³ [North Carolina's Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment Grant Award | NCDHHS](#). Retrieved on 2/2/24.

⁴ <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/providers/provider-info/mentalhealth-development-disabilities-and-substance-abuse-services/service-definitions>. Retrieved on 2/7/2024.

HOPE NC,⁵ in collaboration with UNC TEACHH®,⁶ conducted a comprehensive needs assessment for housing for adults with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD), including a family caregiver survey, completed by 208 individuals, and 30 one-on-one interviews with adults with I/DD. UNC-TEACHH® conducted analysis of the results; the report is pending. In addition, HOPE NC hosted the first NC Inclusive Housing Coalition, bringing together 12 groups across the state working on creating more housing options for people with I/DD.

The State/County Special Assistance In-Home Program for Adults (SAIH)⁷ provides a cash supplement to low-income individuals who are at risk of entering a residential facility. SAIH provides additional support services and income to individuals who would prefer to live at home. The Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) set forth a strategy to advocate for increased access and eligibility for the SAIH program. The quarter prior to implementation of the Olmstead Plan, the DAAS reported 22.5% of all Special Assistance (SA) recipients received support to remain in their homes. As of November 2023, the DAAS reported 27.2% of all SA recipients received support to remain in their homes, an increase of 4.7%.

As of October 2023, the North Carolina Assistive Technology Program (NCATP) served 197 individuals under the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) and Access grant, which ended September 30, 2023. A total of 907 devices were ordered and received. All individuals received training and set up of their devices.

The NCATP hosted the annual Assistive Technology (AT) Expo in October 2023 with over 500 people representing all 100 counties in attendance; 197 attended the AT Expo virtually.

On November 1, 2023 the NCATP received notice of an additional \$400,000.00 in SFY budget 2023 - 2024. Current orders were submitted for the state fiscal year, increasing access to Assistive Technology across North Carolina. Focus areas include four Smart Home demonstration sites in Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh, and Greenville.

Priority Area #6: Address Gaps in Services

Effective December 1, 2023, North Carolina implemented Medicaid expansion, providing healthcare coverage to people ages 19 – 64 who may not have previously qualified. These individuals now have access

⁵ The driving force behind the creation of HOPE is the dilemma many families face: where will their adult children with I/DD live when aging caregivers can no longer care for them. HOPE advocates that those with I/DD have the freedom to choose to live in their own home with access to needed supports and services. See <https://www.hopenorthcarolina.org/about-us>. Retrieved on 2/2/24.

⁶ A university-based system of community regional centers that offers a set of core services along with unique demonstration programs meeting the clinical, training, and research needs of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, their families, and professionals across the state of North Carolina.

⁷ See <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/aging-and-adult-services/state-and-county-special-assistance-home-residents>. Retrieved on 2/2/24.

to coverage for doctor visits, yearly check-ups, emergency care, dental care, mental health services and more, at little or no cost.

The Division of Health Benefits (DHB) promulgated the following clinical coverage policies for recently approved 1915(i) Medicaid State Plan Amendment⁸ services:

- Community Transitions - 8H-6 and Individual Transitions and Supports - 8H-3
- Respite Services - 8H-4
- Community Living and Supports - 8H-5
- Individual Placement and Support – 8H-2
- Supported Employment for I/DD and Traumatic Brain Injury- 8H-1

Eligible individuals will be able to receive these home and community-based services through the Medicaid State Plan (i) option without needing a waiver slot.

Children

The DMH/DD/SUS sought and received approval from SAMHSA for a one-year extension (through September 2024) of the Healthy Transitions grant, targeted for transition-age youth and young adults;⁹ the grant focused on screening, assessment, referral, and coordination of services, including access to employment and education services and supports. Grant participants reported:

- Statistically significant improvement in positive support systems
- Statistically significant decrease in mental health symptoms

The extension is intended to further policy development in support of these outcomes.

North Carolina Psychiatric Access Line (NCPAL) is continuing to support schools, funded by a new award from the Health Resources and Service Administration. Additionally, the state budget that passed this fall includes recurring funding for NCPAL to support ongoing consultation and training in schools, primary care offices, specialty care offices and other locations.

The Division of Child and Family Welfare has executed contracts for Mental Health First Aid and Teen Mental Health First Aid trainings. Train-the-trainer sessions are in process and will continue through June 2024 at a minimum. Technical assistance and supports are also available to local schools and other

⁸ <https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/north-carolinas-transition-1915b3-benefits-1915i/download?attachment>. Retrieved on 2/2/24.

⁹ A student with a disability, age 14 to 22, is eligible for transition services as part of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP), so long as that student is enrolled in a public school, which includes charter schools.

training partners. The Teen Mental Health sessions are filled and a Teen Summit is scheduled for the Spring of 2024 at University of North Carolina – Wilmington.

Adults and Older Adults

Between July and December of 2023, the Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion has trained 1,517 people on community inclusion through trainings such as: Community Inclusion as a Medical Necessity; Strategies for Connecting People in the Community; and Promoting the Development and Use of Natural Supports. Mark Salzer, Ph.D., Director for the Rehabilitation and Research Training Center within the University’s Collaborative on Community Inclusion, presented at the National Alliance on Mentally Illness North Carolina’s (NAMI NC) annual conference in October.

The *Social Bridging NC* webpage is live and cross posted on the Division of Aging and Adult Services’ (DAAS) website. The DAAS intends to market the webpage to Area Agencies on Aging, Senior Centers and other potential program providers to get commitment for new program content.

Priority #7: Explore Alternatives to Full Guardianship

The DAAS - Adult Services Section continues to update current guardianship training and is working with UNC Cares to develop new training to focus on the recent legislative changes to the guardianship statute.

One cohort of residents at each State Developmental Center completed their training using the Project STIR™¹⁰ materials. The Division of State Operated Healthcare Facilities (DSOHF) is now working to develop paid advocacy positions for people with disabilities at each of the Centers.

In partnership with the Money Follows the Person program and UNC Cares, the DSOHF led a training series for staff within the State Developmental Centers on guardianship and guardianship alternatives. Additionally, the Division hosted a training for legally responsible persons of those residing in the Centers.

Priority Area #8: Address Disparities in Access to Services

The NCDHHS continued to post important new information in Spanish on its website.

Priority Area #9: Increase Input from Individuals with Lived Experience

As a result of participation in the SAMHSA Healthy Transitions grant awarded to the DMH/DD/SUS and targeted for transition-age youth and young adults, participants reported an increase in “voice and choice,” deciding their own treatment goals and obtaining the information necessary to take charge of managing their mental health at discharge.

¹⁰ Project STIR™ is a training program for self-advocates designed to provide people with disabilities with the tools to advocate for themselves, work with others in advocacy and gain leadership experiences.

The NCDHHS executed a contract with University of North Carolina - Greensboro that includes funding for up to 25 individuals to obtain the national Family Peer Specialist Certification. Funding will continue through June 30, 2024.

Priority Area #10: Reduce Transportation Burdens for Individuals with Disabilities

The Western North Carolina Initiative for Supportive Housing (WISH), the Money Follows the Person (MFP) collective impact grant awarded to Land of Sky, entertained a grant proposal for a ride-sharing program. The proposal was not supported as it didn't align with funding rules; however, it led to a focus on travel trainings for older adult riders and pinpointed the need to train transportation workers to better support riders with I/DD. Work with WISH has been vital in improving engagement on transportation issues, highlighting the importance of quality transportation services for the disability community.

Priority Area #11: Use Data for Quality Improvement

The NCDHHS staff continues working with Mathematica to enhance Transitions to Community Living (TCL) data quality and integration, performance measurement, and use of program data for evaluation and decision-making. The partnership is also establishing a quality assurance structure and outcomes evaluation for the state's Olmstead Plan.

- In September, 2023 the NCDHHS executed a data use agreement with Mathematica to facilitate access to data needed to support Olmstead Plan monitoring, and continues to work with Mathematica to identify data sources for Olmstead Plan measures.
- Mathematica continued operation and maintenance of the TCL dashboard and will provide this data for analysis in the Olmstead Plan.

Mathematica will expand the Olmstead Plan progress monitoring dashboard in 2024 to facilitate improved tracking and analysis of the 2024 - 2025 Olmstead Plan measures.

Challenges for Plan Implementation

Navigating Multiple Priorities

The NCDHHS continues its commitment to deploy its available staff resources in support of several critical priorities. The Division of Health Benefits (DHB) and the Local Management Entities/ Managed Care Organizations (LME/MCOs) prepared for a seamless transition to Medicaid expansion, effective December 1, 2023, assuring adequate provider capacity to meet the predicted increased demand for services. The DHB prepared and issued clinical coverage policies for recently approved 1915(i) Medicaid

State Plan Amendment¹¹ services. Finally, the DHB submitted an amendment to the NC Innovat1915(c) Home and Community Based Services waiver, to make some flexibilities from the Appendix K amendment permanent, adding 350 additional slots, and increasing the annual waiver cap from \$135,000 to \$184,000 to be effective 4/1/24.

The NCDHHS received a historical \$835 million increase to its budget to improve access to behavioral health services in the community, including a focus on supporting individuals released from incarceration. These initiatives and more are vital for North Carolinians with disabilities to live and receive services in their communities. Prioritization of this work has resulted in a need to extend the current Olmstead Plan for an additional quarter to allow for the time needed by the NCDHHS to work with the TAC and Mathematica on the 2024 - 2025 Plan.

Launch of Tailored Plans

As of the close of 2023, a date had yet to be identified for launch of the Behavioral Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Tailored Plans.¹² The delay has impacted several strategies within the 2022 - 2023 Olmstead Plan.

Next Steps in Olmstead Plan Implementation

The Department leadership and staff will continue working with TAC to identify new or emerging efforts to be included in the updated 2024 - 2025 Olmstead Plan. The NCDHHS will continue working with Mathematica to finalize measures that can be used to assess the impact of the Plan on achieving community inclusion for North Carolinians with disabilities.

¹¹ <https://medicaid.ncdhhs.gov/north-carolinas-transition-1915b3-benefits-1915i/download?attachment>. Retrieved on 2/2/24.

¹² The NCDHHS subsequently announced launch of the Behavioral Health and Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities Tailored Plan for July 1, 2024. Retrieved from <https://ncmedicaidplans.gov/en/tailored-plan-services> on 2/2/24.