



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
1 Ashburton Place, 11th Floor
Boston, MA 02108*

DEVAL L. PATRICK
Governor

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
Lieutenant Governor

JUDYANN BIGBY, M.D.
Secretary

Tel.: 617-573-1800
Fax: 617-573-1890
www.mass.gov/eohhs

CONTACT: Jennifer Kritz, jennifer.kritz@state.ma.us, 617-573-1612 (o), 857-488-9983 (c)

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PATRICK ADMINISTRATION PLAN PROMOTES COMMUNITY LIVING OPTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AND ELDERS

BOSTON — The Patrick Administration today announced the creation of the Commonwealth's first Olmstead Plan, a roadmap and action plan reflecting the Governor's commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities and elders have access to community-living opportunities and supports that address each individual's diverse needs, abilities and backgrounds. Unveiled today at a ceremony in the State House, the plan provides a framework for the state's "Community First" long-term care agenda.

"Opportunity and choice are at the heart of both the Olmstead ruling and our 'Community First' agenda," said Governor Deval Patrick. "Our new plan helps reform the way we deliver long-term care."

Massachusetts' plan, which incorporates an initial 18-month implementation strategy, is designed to maximize the extent to which elders and people with disabilities of all ages are able to live successfully in their homes and communities. The fundamental goals of the Olmstead Plan are to help individuals transition from institutional care; expand access to community-based long-term supports; improve the capacity and quality of long-term supports in the community; expand access to affordable and accessible housing and supports; promote employment of persons with disabilities and elders; and promote awareness of long-term supports.

The Commonwealth's "Community First" agenda and Olmstead Plan anticipates the need for a full range of long-term supports, including home and community-based care, housing, employment opportunities, as well as nursing facility services.

"The Patrick Administration is deeply committed to making sure that people with disabilities and elders in Massachusetts have access to the services and supports they need to live with dignity and independence in the community," said Secretary of Health and Human Services Dr. JudyAnn Bigby. "We are on the road to achieving this vision by re-aligning existing resources to address the diverse needs and backgrounds of people with disabilities and elders in Massachusetts."

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STATE PLAN PROMOTES COMMUNITY LIVING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND ELDERS (cont'd, page 2/2)

Secretary of Elder Affairs Michael Festa added, “The Commonwealth’s new Olmstead Plan is particularly important at a time when the number of elders and people with disabilities, many of whom depend on state programs, is growing. With a broader range of services and supports in the community, many seniors and people with disabilities may live in less restrictive—and sometimes less expensive—settings in their own communities, where many wish to remain.”

“This Plan is our opportunity to move forward with the state in realizing the rights and desires for independence and community living shared by people with disabilities and elders,” said Paul Spooner, a member of the Planning Group and the Director of the MetroWest Independent Living Center.

In 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Olmstead v. L.C.* that the Americans with Disabilities Act required states to assure that individuals with disabilities have the opportunity to live in the community—not only in institutional settings. The Court also determined that each state should develop a plan consistent with the ruling. Although community advocates issued an informal People’s Olmstead Plan in 2002, the Patrick Administration was the first to prioritize the establishment of an official state plan.

The Commonwealth’s new Olmstead Plan is particularly important at a time when the number of elders and people with disabilities, many of whom depend on state programs, is growing. With a broad array of home and community-based services, including case management and housing supports, the approximately 1,640,000 elders and people with disabilities may live in less restrictive—and sometimes less expensive—community-based settings where many wish to remain.

Over the past six months, officials in the Executive Office of Health and Human Services have worked collaboratively with advocates in the disability and elder communities, providers and consumers to develop the plan’s framework and implementation strategies. Using the People’s Olmstead Plan as a starting point, the Planning Committee reviewed previous and current initiatives focused on promoting community-living opportunities and identified gaps in needed service and policy development.

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