

Why Olmstead Matters



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In 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.* ("Olmstead") gave Americans with disabilities the right to live in a community setting rather than in an institution.

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The Supreme Court recognized that unjustified segregation in institutions is illegal discrimination because it supports beliefs that people with disabilities are incapable or unworthy of participating in community life.

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The Olmstead Decision recognized the value, dignity, and humanity of people with disabilities.

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People who had been institutionalized for decades are now living and receiving services in their communities.

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Many more people with disabilities never have to experience life in an institution due to more options and services available in their own communities.

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People with disabilities now have greater control over where they live and the services they receive. People can self-direct their own services.

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People with disabilities now have opportunities to obtain real jobs, earning real wages.

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People with disabilities now have the opportunity to develop relationships with people in their communities who have shared interests.

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People with disabilities now have the opportunity to practice their faith and worship where they want, if they choose to do so.

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People who are active in their communities are less likely to experience abuse, than people living in institutional settings.

"Recognition that unjustified institutional isolation of persons with disabilities is a form of discrimination reflects two evident judgments. First, institutional placement of persons who can handle and benefit from community settings perpetuates unwarranted assumptions that persons so isolated are incapable or unworthy of participating in community life...Second, confinement in an institution severely diminishes the everyday life activities of individuals, including family relations, social contacts, work options, economic independence, educational advancement, and cultural enrichment."

*Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Writing for the Majority of the U.S. Supreme Court, *Olmstead v L.C.*, June 22, 1999*