



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

North Carolina Olmstead Plan Implementation

Summary Report

April 1 through June 30, 2026

October 2026

In the second quarter of 2026 (April 1 to June 30), the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) worked with other state agencies and community partners to carry out the 2024–2025 Olmstead Plan. At the end of the quarter, agencies shared updates on what they did in the Plan’s six priority areas. These updates help measure how much progress is being made.

This report focuses on two Priority Areas that support Olmstead goals:

- Priority Area 2: Strengthen Opportunities to Divert and Transition Individuals from Unnecessary Institutionalization and Settings that Separate Them from the Community
- Priority Area 4: Increase Opportunities for Pre-Employment Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities, and Competitive Integrated Employment for Adults with Disabilities

Progress Highlights in Priority Area 2: Strengthen Opportunities to Divert and Transition Individuals from Unnecessary Institutionalization and Settings that Separate Them from the Community

In Quarter 2, the Division of Social Services (DSS) continued promoting Kinship Care and efforts to attract additional resource families, thereby preventing more children with disabilities from being placed unnecessarily in congregate care settings. DSS initiated the Unlicensed Kinship Care program in November 2023, and as of May 2026, there were 1,982 children in kinship homes that received the payments.

DSS continues partnering with Kinnect, a non-profit organization, to provide family search and engagement training to child welfare agencies, private agencies, and courts to support a kin-first culture. The Division will use quarterly Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) meetings with county child welfare agencies from July to September to bring awareness about ways to support placement and connection with kin.

The Olmstead Plan includes a goal for the Division of State Operated Healthcare Facilities (DSOHF) to develop accessible surveys for people with disabilities (PWD) admitted to State Developmental Centers (SDCs) before 2012 who do not have a memorandum of agreement (MOA), and for their legally responsible persons (LRPs).¹ This work aims to gather information regarding perceptions and level of interest in learning more about community-based services. To do this work, DSOHF secured a contract with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities (CIDD). The Division meets monthly with CIDD to review the progress of this work. As of the 2nd quarter of 2026, the survey of PWD and LRPs is fully occurring within all three State Development Centers. The first evaluation report

¹ The Memorandum of Agreement outlines the length of time a PWD will stay in a State Developmental Center. It is a contractual agreement between the PWD’s legally responsible person, the LME/MCO, and the State Developmental Center.

will be shared with DSOHF on 8/1/26. The contract with UNC CIDD ends in about one year at which point there will be an evaluative report shared.

In partnership with the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program, DSOHF completed activities to provide an in-depth series on Guardianship and Supported Decision Making for LRPs and staff to promote increased choice for individuals living in the SDCs. The Division contracted with the UNC Centers for Aging Research and Educational Services (CARES) to develop a 3-year curriculum outlining the topics and training related to guardianship in NC. Training sessions were provided for staff and LRPs according to the guardianship or rights topic identified. Staff training sessions were followed by an office hours session to apply information learned to specific situations within the SDCs. The final UNC CARES deliverable was a video explaining the MOA at the SDCs to support LRPs' understanding that it is a time-limited admission.

DSOHF also completed its strategies to implement an escalation process for individuals on an MOA experiencing significant barriers to transition and developed criteria for determining which individuals on the Community Transition List should be prioritized for review by LME/MCO leadership at a 9-month total length of stay. For all SDCs, the overall length of initial MOA was reduced to 3 months from the time of admission and must now be renewed monthly until discharge. The escalation process was established and implemented at a 6-month length of stay. A new process for further escalation will begin in the near future.

Progress Highlights in Priority Area 4: Increase Opportunities for Pre-Employment Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities, and Competitive Integrated Employment for Adults with Disabilities

Improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities requires an adequate and trained workforce. The Division of Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities (EIPD) is committed to facilitating a stable and sufficient workforce, including an adequate number of quality vocational rehabilitation counselors, by offering wages that are competitive.

Recruitment metrics indicate that the process for filling vacancies has improved. The days-to-fill rate for January 2025 - April 2025 was 111 days; the rate in January - April 2026 is down to 75 days. However, the vacancy rate continues to be 22.5%, with no significant change over the second quarter of 2026.

EIPD continues to monitor the vocational rehabilitation counselor job vacancy rate on an ongoing basis to identify monthly changes. There have been many vacancies filled with internal staff in lateral or promotional opportunities. The new hiring system, "Workday," is fully operational for completing the process from the initial request to post through the hire. The movement of hire status, including the offer letter and onboarding paperwork, is now tracked through the Workday program.

Quarter 2 updates from Inclusion Connects include:

- A new [Informed Choice video](#) is now available on NCDHHS YouTube.

- A [Lunch and Learn](#) was held on June 17. Inclusion Works offered information on “From School to Work” and the availability of transition services.

In Quarter 2, the EIPD continued its collaboration with Work Together NC and the Post-Secondary Education Alliance. The EIPD Program Specialist for Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) participates in monthly advisory meetings with Work Together NC, a statewide initiative focused on the transition to and through adulthood for individuals with I/DD. Feedback is provided by the steering committee for programmatic offerings and resource development. In addition, the Program Specialist for I/DD attends the Inclusive Alliance Employment Subcommittee when able.

The Program Specialist for I/DD also participates in meetings of the NC Postsecondary Education Alliance. This opportunity provides continued collaboration between EIPD and colleges and universities serving students with I/DD in order to share resources and offer information on available services. The collaboration between EIPD and the NC Community College System, Bridge to Success, is nearing the end of its two-year funding allocation. This partnership enabled counselors with EIPD to be housed on six community college campuses to offer vocational rehabilitation services with ease of access for students on campus. The students served under Bridge to Success will continue to be served by EIPD, and the collaboration with the community colleges will continue as we support students with I/DD.

The EIPD continued implementing the Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment/Project Spark (SWTCIE/SPARK) grant, offering increased supportive services to people with I/DD who wish to move from not working, or from working in a non-integrated setting, to working in a setting that is considered competitive integrated employment. Project Spark currently has 181 people receiving services through three pilot sites: Chatham Trades, Tri-County Industries, and Wake Enterprises. To date, 47 Spark participants are now competitively employed. Four of the 47 transitioned from subminimum wage employment, while the other 43 were considering subminimum wage employment but were redirected to CIE. In addition, Project Spark mini sites continue to bring Spark services to people with I/DD statewide. While the mini site data has yet to be verified, we are currently projecting 300 additional people enrolled and over 30 additional CIE outcomes.

Project Spark success stories continue to be shared with partners at least monthly. While CIE outcome numbers are typically the focus, EIPD celebrates all successes attributed to participation in Project Spark. Various success stories continue to be shared via [social media](#), newsletters, and through internal and external meetings.

Additional areas of progress:

Priority Area 3: Address Gaps In Community-Based Services

In Quarter 2, the Division of Social Services (DSS) continued efforts to expand the Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Teams (START) program, a specialized child welfare service delivery model that has been shown, when implemented with fidelity, to improve outcomes for children and families affected by parental substance use and child maltreatment. DSS met with four additional counties in North Carolina that expressed interest in the START model. To date, of these four, two have expressed an interest in implementing this model during this funding period, and one has expressed interest in attending START training with Children and Family Futures to prepare for implementation.

By the end of Quarter 2, all counties actively working to implement START had hired staff to fill positions. Barriers to providing the required trainings for new staff have been addressed, and all but two of the family mentor staff and services coordinators have completed the required pre-service training to work with child welfare families. All sites have completed the START Foundations Four training

Priority Area 5: Strengthen Opportunities to Divert and Transition Individuals from the Criminal Justice System that Promote Tenure in and Successful Reentry to Inclusive Communities
The EIPD continued efforts to increase delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services (pre-ETS) to adjudicated youth in the Youth Detention Centers.

Next Steps in Olmstead Plan Implementation

Feedback has been received on the 2026–2031 Olmstead Plan and updates are being made based on the feedback.

