

77 OLMSTEAD COMMENTS REQUESTED 4-10-09, and Unlock Update Too!

Dearest Advocates:

Last year, the Governor appointed a task force to develop the State's response to the Olmstead decision and as part of it voluntary compliance agreement with the United States Department of Justice. I am a part of that committee. The Olmstead Planning Committee is authorized and ultimately responsible for approving the revised plan. The Plan is to be the mechanism for guiding the movement of people with developmental disabilities and mental health issues from state hospitals and institutions into the community. (This means that individuals with DD and MH issues should be supported and funded in the community and NOT in institutions/hospitals or nursing homes when it is the choice of the family, individual or guardian)

Georgia is in the process of revising the State's Olmstead Plan "A NEW LIFE". The Plan is the result of a collaborative effort between staff of DHR, its Division of MHDDAD, and Division of Aging Services along with the Georgia Department of Community Health, under the leadership of Abel Ortiz, Georgia's Olmstead Coordinator appointed by the Governor. The Olmstead Planning Committee has also played an active role in crafting the revised draft. The Committee anticipates completing the plan by 4/30/09.

WE need your feedback on this draft plan! You may access the document and the [comment form by clicking here](#). Please review the Plan and use the Olmstead Plan Feedback Form to provide feedback and comments. The feedback form should be sent via email to Olmsteadplan@dhr.state.ga.us. **All feedback and comments must be submitted using the feedback form, and must be submitted no later than 5 P.M. April 10, 2009!**

This is a critical time in our State and we need the feedback from everyone regarding supporting community and home based programs/funding and waivers in the State of Georgia!

Below is the actual webpage on DHR's website. Go to www.dhr.georgia.gov, click under Olmstead Strategic Plan "More Information". There you will find the "A New Life: Olmstead Strategic Plan" and the "Feedback Form".

In addition, the House and Senate agreed to restore the 135 MRWP (Now called the NOW/COMP Waivers) slots back into the FY09 budget! This is great news but we need to continue to advocate. See below updates and ways you can make a difference for individuals with disabilities needing waivers in GA!

"UNITED – WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE!"

Sincerely,

Heidi

(Proud Mother to Jacob - 9 yrs old with Down syndrome and Jared - 7 yrs old)

“Help the Children Now, So They Can Help Themselves Later!”

www.heidijmoore.com

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From www.dhr.georgia.gov :

Olmstead Strategic Plan

Georgia is in the process of revising the State's Olmstead Plan "A NEW LIFE". The attached DRAFT is the result of a collaborative effort between staff of DHR, its Division of MHDDAD, and Division of Aging Services along with the Georgia Department of Community Health, under the leadership of Abel Ortiz, Georgia's Olmstead Coordinator appointed by the Governor. The Olmstead Planning Committee has also played an active role in crafting the revised draft. The Olmstead Planning Committee, appointed by the Governor, is authorized and ultimately responsible for approving the revised plan. We anticipate completing the plan by 4/30/09.

At this stage of the revisions, we are requesting public comment. Please review the attached Plan and use the attached Olmstead Plan Feedback Form to provide feedback and comments. The feedback form should be sent via email to Olmsteadplan@dhr.state.ga.us. All feedback and comments must be submitted using the feedback form, and must be submitted no later than 5 P.M. 4/10/09.

Associated Document(s):



[A NEW LIFE: Olmstead Strategic Plan](#)



[Feedback Form](#)

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Update from Unlock The Waiting Lists and Advocacy Needed:

I have great news... The House and Senate agreed to restore the 135 MRWP slots back into the FY09 budget!

Go to <http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com/advocate.html>

Our focus now shifts to the FY2010 budget covering services that will be available from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010. There are a few issues at play this year that are important for you to understand.

THE BAD NEWS

Because Georgia's economy is following national trends, on March 3rd Governor Perdue lowered his FY2010 Budget revenue estimate by \$1.6 billion. Having less money to work with, the Senate and House will have to cut the overall budget by a substantial amount. They are now reviewing a revised budget offered by the Governor. Instead of naming specific programs to cut, the Governor simply included a \$3M cut to Developmental Disability programs in DHR and then left it up to legislators.

Go to <http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com/advocate.html> to see a summary of cuts.

THE GOOD NEWS

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was passed by Congress and signed by President Obama and will offer over \$600M of relief for Medicaid services. This relief is offered through an enhancement of Georgia's Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) from 65.1% to 74.82%. This increased FMAP simply means that before the ARRA, it used to take around 35 cents to get a dollar of disability services in Georgia, and now it only takes only ONE QUARTER to get a dollars worth of supports!

THE BOTTOM LINE: GEORGIA NOW HAS A CHOICE!

Georgia can use this enhanced Medicaid match from the ARRA to invest in services for people with disabilities - OR - they agree with the Governor and make cuts to disability supports while withdrawing or borrowing much needed state money to send to other Governmental programs. This makes no sense when we have over 7,000 people with disabilities waiting for much needed help!!

Please ask your legislator not to move \$42,743,523 out of DHR's Developmental Disability program accounts and over \$450 million from DCH's Medicaid accounts until they expand disability supports to Unlock Georgia's Waiting Lists for services. THERE ARE OVER 7,000 people waiting who are depending on their decision!

We are asking them to:

- Add funds for 2,000 MRWP services in the DHR budget
- Add funds for 630 ICWP slots in the DCH budget
- Add funds for \$6M in Family Supports in the DHR budget
- Restore funds for 135 vacant MRWP services
- Add funds for a 3% rate increase for disability providers in the DHR and DCH budgets
- Protect the funds for 150 MRWP services and 100 ICWP slots for the Money Follows the Person programs in the DHR and DCH budgets

Go to <http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com/advocate.html> to ACT NOW!

Go to the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute website for analysis on current legislation being considered that could reduces state revenue even further. <http://www.gbpi.org>

Dave Blanchard

www.unlockthewaitinglists.com