

The Olmstead Commission's goal is to move North Dakota towards greater integration and inclusion for individuals with disabilities.
OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

NDDAC Advocacy Call: Money Follows the Person

January 5th at 12pm

NDDAC Advocacy Call: Money Follows the Person

January 5th at 7:30pm

Cross Disability Advisory Council

January 8th from 9am- 5pm

North Dakota Stakeholder Meeting

January 9th at 1pm

Olmstead Commission Advisory Council Meeting

January 7th at 1pm

Click [here](#) to watch the full documentary



Willowbrook: The Last Great Disgrace

Marking the Anniversary of the Exposé

Willowbrook State School, located in New York, opened in 1948 as the nation's largest institution for individuals with disabilities, promising care, safety, and support. Instead, it became a place of neglect, disease, and inhumanity. Understaffed and overcrowded, children were left for hours without basic care, while nearly every resident contracted hepatitis.

The truth began to emerge after Senator Robert Kennedy's 1965 visit, but real change came in 1972 when Geraldo Rivera's exposé *Willowbrook: The Last Disgrace* revealed the horrific conditions to the world. His unannounced visit showed children living in filth, many left unattended for long periods due to severe understaffing.

The public outrage that followed became a turning point for disability rights, exposing systemic abuse and promoting community-based care and respect for individuals with disabilities. This movement helped pave the way for the landmark *Olmstead v. L.C.* (1999) ruling, which affirmed the right to live in the community rather than institutions when appropriate supports are available.



Willowbrook showed us the cost of segregation.

Olmstead shows us the path to inclusion.



Geraldo Rivera, the investigative reporter who exposed the conditions inside Willowbrook, once explained how the title of his now-famous exposé came to be. On the day Rivera entered Willowbrook with his camera crew, Bernard Carabello, who had spent 18 years confined in the institution, was finally being signed out on his 21st birthday. Rivera interviewed Bernard for the documentary, and the two formed a lifelong friendship. During that first interview, Rivera asked him, "What do you think about this place?" Bernard replied simply, "It's a disgrace." From those words came the title: *Willowbrook: The Last Great Disgrace*.

Watch the interview from NYS Council on Developmental Disabilities: [Remembering Willowbrook: A conversation with Bernard Carabello and Geraldo Rivera](#)



The 2025 ND Olmstead Commission Annual Report is now available on the Olmstead Commission website.

This year, we've worked hard to deliver on our mission, grow our initiatives, and strive for meaningful impact.

Our annual report highlights the progress, projects, and achievements that define this year.

Click [here](#) to view the annual report.

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