

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION IN TENNESSEE: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

The Integration Mandate has been part of federal law for nearly 50 years. It first appeared in 1977 in the regulations implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act for programs receiving federal funding. When the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990, the Integration Mandate was included in Title II, which applies to state and local governments.

Today, both Section 504 and the ADA protect the right of people with disabilities to receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs.

Olmstead is a 1999 Supreme Court decision. The court ruled that unnecessarily keeping people with disabilities in institutions is discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

You have a say in...



Where you live.



Where you work.



Where you receive
services.



What you do
during the day.



How you get around
your community.



Spending time
with family.



Making choices about
relationships and friendships.

When does Olmstead apply according to the Supreme Court?

When all three are true:

1. Community services are right for you.
2. You want to receive services in the community.
3. The state can reasonably provide them.

Olmstead gives states room to plan and provide services based on available resources. The goal is to make sure people with disabilities have choices and opportunities to be part of their community.

What this looks like in Tennessee

- **Katie Beckett Program:** care and financial support for children with disabilities and complex medical needs.
- **ECF CHOICES:** support for daily living in your own home and community.
- **TEIS (Tennessee Early Intervention Services):** free therapy for infants and toddlers at home or in the community.
- **Family Support Program:** flexible funding for the extra costs of living at home with a disability.
- **Vocational Rehabilitation:** job training and coaching.

New Federal Interpretation

On June 18, 2026, [the U.S. Department of Justice](#) (DOJ) released an Olmstead interpretation memo about our right to live in our communities. The DOJ stated it “will not rely upon the Olmstead Guidance in its enforcement of Title II of the ADA.”

The DOJ's new interpretation does NOT erase the ADA, Section 504, or your right to challenge unnecessary institutionalization. If the federal government steps back from enforcing our rights, it's up to the state of Tennessee to make sure our rights are enforced and protected under the law. Non-profit organizations and private agencies can also assist individuals who feel their right to be served in the community has been violated.

Need help or want to learn more?

- **Disability Rights Tennessee:** help understanding and defending your rights.
<https://www.disabilityrightstn.org/>
- **Tennessee Justice Center:** <https://www.tnjustice.org/freehelp>
- **OlmsteadRights.org:** plain-language information and self-advocacy tools.
<https://www.olmsteadrights.org/faq/>
- **The Arc of the United States:** <https://thearc.org/resource/olc-memo-integration/>
- **Tennessee Centers for Independent Living:** <https://www.silctn.org/>



Scan the QR code to the left for information and resources about the community integration mandate in Tennessee and a sample letter template with ideas you could use to contact your legislator asking for their support.