**Olmstead: Community Integration for Everyone**

The U.S. Supreme Court's 1999 landmark **decision** in **Olmstead** v. L.C. (**Olmstead**) found the unjustified segregation of people with disabilities is a form of unlawful discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). ... This principle is central to the Supreme Court's **Olmstead decision**.

**About *Olmstead***

The story of the Olmstead case begins with two women, Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson, who had mental illness and developmental disabilities, and were voluntarily admitted to the psychiatric unit in the State-run Georgia Regional Hospital. Following the women's medical treatment there, mental health professionals stated that each was ready to move to a community-based program. However, the women remained confined in the institution, each for several years after the initial treatment was concluded. They filed suit under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for release from the hospital.

**The Decision**

On June 22, 1999, the United States Supreme Court held in *Olmstead v. L.C.* that unjustified segregation of persons with disabilities constitutes discrimination in violation of title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Court held that public entities must provide community-based services to persons with disabilities when (1) such services are appropriate; (2) the affected persons do not oppose community-based treatment; and (3) community-based services can be reasonably accommodated, taking into account the resources available to the public entity and the needs of others who are receiving disability services from the entity.

The Supreme Court explained that its holding "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 of 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."

The Olmstead decision encompasses the full range of community life from living arrangements, employment options, access to medical treatment, leisure activities and access to friends and family. This may all appear to be self evident, but is not universally available to many persons with disabilities because of the severity of their disability condition, availability of family or other in-kind support, geographic location and state and local financial limitations.

Excerpt from ADA.gov