

Housing*

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD), like all Americans, have a right to live in their own homes, in the community. Children and youth belong with families. Adults should control where they live and who they live with. They should have opportunities to rent or buy their own homes. They also must have the freedom to choose what they do each day.

Issue

People with I/DD have a very hard time finding housing. There is not enough housing that:

- Is safe.
- People with I/DD have enough money to pay for. Many people with I/DD do not have enough money to pay for housing because they have a hard time getting jobs because:
 - They do not get enough support at work,
 - They are discriminated against. This means they are treated differently because of their disability.
 - They do not understand SSI and other social security benefits related to working.
 - Schools did not did not do a good job of helping them get ready to work.
- People can get into and move around in using wheelchairs, walkers, and other equipment. This also includes adjusting counter/light switch heights, the type of door knobs and light switches used, etc. This means it is “accessible.”
- Is in the community rather than separated from where others live. This means the housing is “integrated.”

Other reasons people with I/DD cannot find housing include:

- People with I/DD are sometimes discriminated against. That means they are treated differently than people who do not have disabilities. Some people do not want to rent or sell apartments or houses to people with I/DD.
- Policies and programs often segregate people with I/DD. That means they support housing for people with disabilities that is separate from other people in the community.
- People with I/DD may need funding (money) from different housing programs to be able to pay for their housing. But too often the programs do not work together so people cannot get enough funding.

In the past, families with a child with a disability had to put their child in an institution or try to take care of them at home without any help. Institutions were not good for people with I/DD because they were separated from their families and communities. They did not have a chance to live like other people or get the supports they needed and wanted. A lot of times they were not treated well. Institutions also cost a lot of money that could have been used to support more people at home and in the community,

As people with I/DD have left institutions or their family homes, most of the time they have been placed in group homes. Group homes are usually bigger than family homes and owned or rented by provider agencies. People in group homes may have little control over:

- Where they live and who they y live with.
- The services they get.
- How they spend their time.

More and more people have come to understand that people with I/DD belong in the community. As a result, more housing is needed in the community. This need has grown as more:

- People leave institutions
- Young adults go to school with students without disabilities.

- Adults with I/DD live with elderly parents who cannot continue to support them.

Finding housing in the community is very hard for people with I/DD because they usually have very little money. Many people with I/DD get all or most of their money from Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This is usually not enough to pay for rent and other things they need to live in the community.

Usually, the only way people with I/DD have enough money to pay rent is if the rent is low. There are programs that help people pay their rent. They are called “affordable housing programs.” Not everyone who needs help from an affordable housing program can get it because:

- These programs do not get enough money from the government to help everyone who needs it.
- There are long waiting lists.
- Most people with I/DD use Medicaid to pay for their services, but Medicaid usually cannot be used for rent or other housing costs in the community.

All these things make it very hard for people to move from institutions into the community. When they do not get the housing they need in the community, people with I/DD can end up in an institution or with no place to live.

Position

People with I/DD have the right to live in safe, accessible, affordable housing in the community.

- People with I/DD must have the right to choose where they live and who they live with. They must have privacy in their homes. That means no one has a right to know what happens in their home. They can keep that information to themselves.
- People with I/DD should be able to get support when and where they want it.
- People with I/DD should choose how they spend their time. They should also

be free to come and go as they want. Their homes should look the way they want them to. Agencies that support them should respect each person's choices and preferences.

- People with I/DD should have opportunities to be with people without disabilities as much as they want.
- People with I/DD must be safe where they live. They also have the right to take risks, make choices, and be in control of their own lives.
- People with I/DD need good information to help them decide where to live and who to live with. They and their families must be given clear information about the good things that come with living in the community. They must have the chance to visit different kinds of housing in the community and meet people with disabilities who are living there. Their questions and concerns should be answered.
- All children and youth need a home with a family that makes them feel safe and loved.
- Adults with I/DD should get the supports they need to move out of their family's home when they want to.
- Housing for people with I/DD must work well with the supports and services they need. This includes transportation and other services people in the community use.
- There must be enough funding (money) for services to support people to live in the community. Funding must always be available. It should not be limited or cut for no good reason. People with I/DD must not be institutionalized or removed from their homes and communities because the state cuts money from the budget.
- Government programs, rules, and decisions should support people with I/DD to live in housing like everyone else.
- People with I/DD and their families should get information about housing options that support independence.

- Housing for people with disabilities should be integrated throughout the community.
- Government funds (money) must be moved from institutions to community supports. There is no need for Institutions or other places where a lot of people with I/DD live together away from everyone else. They are not a good way to support people no matter what kind of disability they have or how much help they need,
- People with I/DD must have housing choices they can afford. This includes people with very little money. Affordable housing programs must get money to serve more people so no one has to wait. Government rules and decisions must make it possible for people with I/DD to get their fair share of all local, state, and national housing support.
- All new housing should use “universal design” and be “visitable.” Universal design means that everyone can get into, move around, and use all areas of the home. This includes people who use wheelchairs, walkers, or other things to move around. Visitable means the housing is built in a way that makes it possible for people with disabilities to easily get into and move around the first floor of the home. This makes it possible for people with disabilities to visit friends, family, and neighbors.
- When apartment buildings are built or renovated (improved), they should include apartments that are accessible to people with disabilities. The number of accessible apartments should be based on the number of people with and without disabilities in the community. This way everyone has a fair chance to find an apartment to meet their needs.
- People with I/DD should not be discriminated against. That means they should be treated the same as everyone else. They must have opportunities like people without disabilities to rent or buy their own homes. This is their right. People who rent or sell housing and others in the community must get correct information about this right. The government must make sure people are not discriminated against.

*The DE DD Council's position statement is based on the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) and The Arc United States position statement on housing.

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