

Having a Home Policy

Policy Issue

Home is much more than "where we live". Home is a place where we like to be, a place where we feel comfortable, safe and in control. It is a place where we can create our own personal environment and enjoy family and friends. Our homes root us in community and add to our identity.

Some people with developmental disabilities live on their own or with their families, others live in a wide range of community residential settings where they receive their services and supports, such as:

- group homes
- supported independent living
- family model care homes, and
- other care facilities.

People with developmental disabilities have the same right to a home as everyone else. This includes the right to choose where and with whom to live, the right to own or rent a home and the right to create a personal home environment, where choices, possessions and privacy are respected.

One of the challenges in providing residential support is to create the qualities of home and ensure the rights, choices and ability of people to participate in the community are honoured and facilitated. A workplace where staff make all decisions is not a home. Institutional settings and congregate care facilities, by virtue of their size and structure, are not homes. The more people who live together in a setting, the more difficult it is to create and honour the qualities of a home.

In any staffed residential care situation, home and workplace can become confused. Staff in these situations are working in someone's home, and that home is not the same as a traditional workplace. Understanding of this difference is essential if people with disabilities are going to live at home in their communities rather than being "housed" in the community.

Increasingly families and people with developmental disabilities are looking to home ownership as a way to secure a home for the future. While people with developmental disabilities have the right to own a home, legal issues and income support policies create obstacles to home ownership. People with developmental disabilities, families, governments, advocacy groups and the legal community must come together to find solutions to these obstacles to ensure the right of home ownership, without penalties, for people with developmental disabilities.

Purpose

To ensure that people with developmental disabilities have the same rights as every other person to live in a home of their choice where they have control over decision making.

Guiding Principles

1. People have the right to choose where and with whom they live.
2. People have the right to create a personal home environment wherever they live and to

have their home respected.

3. People with developmental disabilities have the same right to own a home as anyone else.

Background

Historically many people with developmental disabilities have been subjected to institutionalized and segregated care. In the early 1980's BC began a deinstitutionalization process and closed all of the province's large institutions that housed people with developmental disabilities. Government redirected funding to communities to develop their capacity to provide a wide range of residential supports and services.

Increasingly, fiscal pressures within government have fueled a move towards:

- congregate care
- increasing the number of residents per bedroom and per home, and
- growing support for for-profit and private models of care.

The community living movement sees these moves as regressive steps that are contrary to community living values and do not further the ability of people with developmental disabilities to live at home in their communities.

Since deinstitutionalization, there has been a controversy in the community living movement regarding the use of government funding for residential settings. Government funds non-profit agencies, for-profit agencies and private individuals to provide housing for people with developmental disabilities. In non-profit and other publicly funded social housing models, government funding builds assets that continue to be available to the community and cannot be sold for private gain. In the for-profit and private models, private individuals own the property purchased with government funding which can be sold for private gain.

At the other end of the housing continuum, there is a movement among people with developmental disabilities and their families to purchase homes and have government funding available to purchase required supports and services. While this option may only be available to a small percentage of people, it is a progressive step towards having a secure home.

Policy Statements

1. Deciding where to live is a personal choice. The opportunity to choose where and with whom to live should not be forfeited due to personal care requirements and inflexible regulations as to where care will be provided.

2. Governments have a responsibility to provide affordable housing and a wide range of quality community residential options with individualized supports, within the community for people with developmental disabilities.

3. At no time should a multi-person residence exceed four people, and separate bedrooms must be provided for each person.

The government should not promote or invest money in the development of congregate care facilities.

4. Government funding for housing should be used to build assets that continue to be available to the community and cannot be sold for private gain.

