

CONTEXT

People with an intellectual disability are routinely placed in segregate and congregate housing, including large institutions, nursing and seniors' homes, special care and personal care homes, rehabilitation centers, and other institutional environments. Even in situations where affordable and accessible housing is available, high rates of poverty and lack of supports make a home in community unobtainable for many people with an intellectual disability.

GIVEN THAT:

- People with an intellectual disability want to live independently and want to make their own decisions regarding where and with whom to live.
- A basic desire of families is for their sons and daughters to be safe and have their needs met. Too often people with an intellectual disability are 'placed' in a facility/institution because it is the only safe place that exists within the community in which people's needs can be met. Families are forced to pursue these options not because of preferred choice but rather because these options are the only ones known / available to families.
- Institutions of any size deny people their basic rights of citizenship, personal control, decision making, and independence. Institutions represent an approach that denies choice, denies opportunity, congregates, segregates and isolates people. An institution can never be a home.
- Housing models such as block funded group homes fall short on dimensions of individual control, choice, and decision making. People with an intellectual disability are 'placed' in these models rather than choosing to live there.
- There is a lack of comprehensive responses to guarantee the access of people with an intellectual disability to the support they need to live independently in their communities. Legislation, services, and programs vary across provinces and territories, and access to support is not considered a right, but rather a social assistance program dependent on the availability of services.
- Individuals with an intellectual disability and their families continue to be presented with options that do not support lifestyles of choice, and instead assume that people with an intellectual disability will stay indefinitely in the family home or move into group home programs or other institutional environments.
- The majority of people with intellectual disabilities are unable to obtain needed independent, person-centred planning.

AND WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT:

- Research demonstrates that institutions are not in the best interests of people with an intellectual disability.
- People with an intellectual disability want 'supported living' and not 'residential options' or 'specialized residential facilities'. People with an intellectual disability want a safe and decent home of their own, where they can exercise choice and control in day to day decisions, have tenure as tenants or as homeowners, have access to personalized assistance/support and support from others who care about and respect them. Basic housing standards that apply for other Canadians equally apply for people with an intellectual disability.

- Housing should be accessible and enable full inclusion in the community. Individuals must be directly involved in planning and choosing their housing and support services, and necessary funding must be portable and controlled by the individual rather than an agency or facility.
- A housing situation may be more or less inclusive, based on the degree to which a person's residence, the structure that residence is a part of, and the neighbourhood in which the person lives:
 - Presents or eliminates barriers to activities of daily living due to physical or mental conditions or health problems;
 - Is a home-by-choice, and not the result of congregation of people in a housing unit, development or neighbourhood, based on a demographic characteristic;
 - Presents barriers or enhances capabilities to, on an equal basis with others in society:
 - Participate in the social and economic life of their community;
 - Be recognized and valued as a full member of their neighbourhood;
 - Realize their rights to liberty, security of the person and equality and non-discrimination, consistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and,
 - Live independently and be included in the community.

INCLUSION CANADA IS OF THE VIEW THAT CANADIAN POLICY AND PRACTICE IN THE AREA OF HOUSING FOR PERSONS WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY MUST:

- Recognize that living in the community is a right and public policy in Canada must facilitate, accommodate, and enable the free and full exercise of this right in accordance with Article 19 of the UN CRPD and sections 7 and 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- Affirm a rights-based approach to housing and community inclusion, facilitated by access to adequate and affordable housing, individualized supports of one's choosing, and separation of housing from disability related supports.
- Halt residential admissions of people with an intellectual disability to institutional facilities of all types.
- Close the remaining provincially operated institutions for people with an intellectual disability in Canada and make available a federal fund to provinces and territories to assist in defraying transitional costs associated with institutional closures.
- Assist people with an intellectual disability currently living in institutional environments to move back to community, and redirect savings from closures to the development and expansion of community supports and services including affordable, accessible housing.
- Ensure that Federal and Provincial/Territorial Social Housing Programs be used only to invest in housing options that meet principles of community living and inclusion.
- Ensure affordability (e.g. rental subsidies, rent linked to income, etc.).
- Provide necessary and adequate disability related supports so that persons with an intellectual disability can secure suitable housing; with due flexibility in the provision of disability supports to respond to emergency situations and/or significant changes in disability support needs.
- Require federal, provincial and territorial governments to adopt concrete action plans to prevent the re-institutionalization of people with an intellectual disability and to ensure the provision of community-based services, including adequate housing.
- Provide for adequate investments in creating necessary housing stock to meet the current and future needs of people with an intellectual disability.
- Expand the traditional approach to analyzing housing development to include five domains of housing inclusivity - household, dwelling, structure, person, and neighbourhood - addressing both the social and broader ecological context.